

**FINAL
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**GULF POWER COMPANY
MILITARY POINT TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT**



**U.S. AIR FORCE
TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE
FLORIDA**

MAY 12, 2004

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**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
GULF POWER COMPANY MILITARY POINT TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT
TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA**

RESPONSIBLE AGENCY: United States Air Force

PURPOSE: Tyndall Air Force Base (AFB) has requested that Gulf Power Company provide additional electrical power to meet future energy demands that are forecasted to exceed available capacity as early as 2004. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to construct a new aerial (i.e., overhead) 46kV transmission line, built to 115kV standards, across St. Andrew Bay to connect with existing electrical infrastructure at Military Point for additional electrical power to the Base. A Draft Environmental Assessment (EA), Gulf Power Company Military Point Transmission Line Project, February 27, 2004, was completed pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) *Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act* (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508); Department of Defense Directive (DOD) 6051.1; Air Force Instruction (AFI) 32-7061, *Environmental Impact Analysis Process*; and 32 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 989, *Environmental Impact Analysis Process*.

PROPOSED ACTION: Gulf Power Company is proposing to construct a new aerial (overhead) 46kV transmission line to serve Tyndall AFB. The 3,555-foot-long transmission line would cross St. Andrew Bay from a point near Parker, Florida at Highway 98 on the north side of the bay, terminating at Military Point on Tyndall AFB. This site is located in T4S, R14W, S14 and 23, approximately 1.3 miles northwest of the Dupont Bridge and east of the Smurfit-Stone Paper Mill.

Gulf Power Company presently serves Tyndall AFB via two subaqueous cables that were placed into service in 1961. These two existing cables cannot continue to provide the primary power source to the Base because of electric reliability issues and insufficient electric capacity. The two subaqueous cables are 42 years old; are approaching the end of their service life; and, therefore, present an electric reliability risk to Tyndall AFB. If one existing cable were to fail, there would be insufficient capacity to service existing customers, including Tyndall AFB.

This new 46kV overhead transmission line is designed to meet the anticipated power needs of Tyndall AFB that may exceed available electrical capacity in 2004. The need is primarily attributed to two additional programs: the introduction of the F/A-22 Raptor to Tyndall AFB and the increased personnel, buildings, and equipment associated with the build up of First Air Force (1 AF). Two primary factors support the construction of an overhead line: cost and reliability. Because Tyndall AFB is a primary national defense facility for the southeastern United States, a reliable source of electricity to the Base is essential.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE: Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed overhead 46Kv transmission line and ancillary facilities would not be constructed across St. Andrew Bay to Military Point on AFB. Electrical power to Tyndall AFB would continue to be delivered via the existing subaqueous cables beneath the bay, affecting the electrical reliability and capacity of the Base, potentially resulting in electrical demand exceeding the available capacity as early as 2004. Without implementation of the Proposed Action, the Air Force mission to introduce the F/A-22 Raptor and build up of First Air Force (1 AF) to Tyndall AFB would be severely limited.

PROJECT ALTERNATIVES: There are no potentially viable project alternatives. Project alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed analysis included: 1) underwater cable replacement, 2) alignment along the Dupont Bridge, 3) directional boring under St. Andrew Bay, and 4) energy conservation.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: The EA evaluated potential impacts to the following environmental resources: air quality, water quality, visual resources, soils, vegetation, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, floodplains and wetlands, and the Coastal Zone Management Program. An analysis of potential effects of the Proposed Action on the natural and human environment identified no impacts to: geology, long-term noise, land use, transportation, socioeconomics, recreation, cultural resources, infrastructure/utilities, hazardous materials and wastes, and environmental justice. The principal environmental impacts of the Proposed Action are the temporary and localized increases in air emissions and short-term noise effects to wildlife due to construction and demolition activities, as well as the negative aesthetics impacts to visual resources from the overhead crossing of the transmission lines. Potential impacts to the bald eagle and other birds will be mitigated by measures Gulf Power Company has committed to incorporate into the design and construction of the power transmission facilities.

Air Quality

Temporary, minor increases in exhaust emissions would occur in the construction area. An incremental increase in particulates from fugitive dust also may occur. However, Gulf Power Company's standard construction practices utilize water trucks for dust control. Any increase in emissions and particulates would be expected to be short-term and temporary in nature and limited to the construction phase of the project. No significant air quality impacts would be expected during project operation.

Water Quality

According to committed environmental protection measures, potential adverse impacts to surface water quality would be minimized or avoided. Vegetation removal could incrementally increase surface run-off. However, the project would avoid jurisdictional wetlands and must follow the applicable federal and state permit conditions. The FDEP's *Permit Application Appraisal* for this project states, "Water quality standards as found in Chapter 62-302, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) will be protected by general and specific conditions of the permit such as turbidity screens and turbidity monitoring. No water quality standards are expected to be violated."

Spill prevention or control measures would be implemented to prevent contaminants from migrating off site. No direct or indirect effects would be anticipated from project operation.

Soils

Less than 1 acre of soils would be disturbed, intersecting with the Resota sand soil type. The potential for increased erosion and sedimentation rates would be low, and no loss of productivity during construction from soil disturbance would be expected.

Vegetation

Less than 1 acre of vegetation would be removed or disturbed. An estimated 0.5 acre of shrub and grasses and less than 0.5 acre of hardwoods would be disturbed. No wetland or coastal marsh vegetation would be removed or affected by implementation of the Proposed Action.

Wildlife

Less than 1 acre of habitat would be affected, including approximately 0.5 acre of shrub and grasses and less than 0.5 acre of hardwoods. No reductions in the overall carrying capacity of the associated habitats would occur. Increased noise and human presence during line construction would limit wildlife use during the construction period, with individuals likely returning to the project area upon completion of project construction. However, potential displacement would be minor, given the degree of existing infrastructure associated with the project area.

An in-depth analysis of the potential avian collision and electrocution risks of the Proposed Action was examined. Common area birds, including ducks, herons, cranes, and pelicans, are more susceptible to colliding with overhead lines. To minimize the potential for increased collisions the appropriate marking devices on both the proposed and existing transmission line's overhead static wires would be installed. No electrocution risk to birds exists on the new transmission line structures, given the line's configuration. However, the appropriate retrofit measures to minimize the electrocution risk on the proposed switching poles and the existing electrical riser structures and vertical poles presently located at Military Point would be installed.

Threatened and Endangered Species

No effects to breeding bald eagles or the active nest site near Military Point would be anticipated from project construction activities, given the committed avoidance measure to construct the line and its ancillary facilities outside of the breeding season (October 1 through May 15) within 1,500 feet of the nest site. The proposed additional poles and equipment within the Primary and Secondary Zones would parallel the type of infrastructure currently present near the nest site and would not be considered a violation of the recommended restricted uses identified by federal and state agencies. It is possible to reduce but not totally eliminate the potential for bald eagles to collide with either the proposed or existing transmission lines associated with Military Point on Tyndall AFB. However, several biological and physical factors not only minimize this risk, but also make it unlikely to occur. No electrocution risk would be associated with operation of the proposed 46kV transmission line across St. Andrew Bay. The existing riser and vertical structures would be retrofitted and the design for the proposed switching structures would be raptor-friendly. Gulf Power Company has committed to do both, thereby minimizing potential impacts to nesting, foraging, and roosting bald eagles in the vicinity of the Military Point project and associated nest site.

Floodplains and Wetlands

The Proposed Action would be constructed within the 100-year floodplain of St. Andrew Bay, intersecting with two flood hazard zones, Zones AE and VE. However, disturbance would be temporary during construction and there would be no long-term change of floodplain area or volume.

The proposed transmission line structures and ancillary equipment would avoid wetland areas. According to the FDEP's *Permit Application Appraisal* (FDEP 2003), "all wetland resources have been identified, and impacts have been avoided or minimized." All project structures would be located south (upland) of the Estuarine, Intertidal wetland present at the tip of Military Point. Therefore, no impacts to jurisdictional wetlands would occur, and no coastal marsh vegetation would be affected.

Coastal Zone Management Program

The new line has been designed with a low point clearance of 85.6 feet above Mean High Water. All proposed new transmission line structures on Military Point, including those outside the existing ROW, would be above the Mean High Water Line (+0.65 ft National Geodetic Vertical Datum). The EA addresses each applicable regulatory statutes identified by the Florida Coastal Zone Management Program administered by the FDEP. No significant issues were identified for any of these 23 statutes.

PUBLIC NOTICE AND REVIEW PER AFI 32-7061 AND 32 CFR PART 989: The installation posted a notice in the Panama City News Herald on March 19, 2004. Subsequently, the installation waited for 60 days and received no significant comments. Gulf Power is aware that any work completed within Florida Department of Transportation rights-of-way will require the applicable permit. In addition, the Florida State Clearinghouse, other state agencies involved in the Clearinghouse's procedural reviews, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency reviewed the proposal. On April 29, 2004, the State Clearinghouse approved this project.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT: Based on the Environmental Assessment, prepared in accordance with the requirements of NEPA, CEQ Regulations, DOD Directive 6051.1, Air Force Instruction 32-7061, and 32 CFR 989, I conclude that the Proposed Action will not have a significant impact either by itself or upon considering cumulative effects. This finding is true of both the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required and will not be prepared.

Date

9 Aug 04



BRIAN D. DICKERSON, Colonel, USAF
Vice Commander, 325th Fighter Wing
Chairman, Environmental Protection Committee
Tyndall AFB, FL

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1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

1.1 Purpose of the Proposed Action

Tyndall Air Force Base (AFB) has requested that Gulf Power Company provide additional electrical power to meet future energy demands that are forecasted to exceed available capacity as early as 2004. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to construct a new aerial (i.e., overhead) 46kV transmission line, built to 115kV standards, across St. Andrew Bay to connect with existing electrical infrastructure at Military Point for additional electrical power to the Base.

1.2 Need for the Proposed Action

The anticipated power deficit at Tyndall AFB by 2004 is primarily attributed to the current and future expansion of the Base's programs and associated infrastructure. Two significant programs include the introduction of the F/A-22 Raptor to Tyndall AFB and the increased personnel, buildings, and equipment associated with the build up of First Air Force (1 AF).

Gulf Power Company presently serves Tyndall AFB via two subaqueous cables that were placed into service in 1961. These two existing cables cannot continue to provide the primary power source to the Base because of electric reliability issues and insufficient electric capacity. The two subaqueous cables are 42 years old; are approaching the end of their service life; and, therefore, present an electric reliability risk to Tyndall AFB. If one existing cable were to fail, there would be insufficient capacity to service existing customers, including Tyndall AFB.

Gulf Power Company has proposed to construct this new overhead transmission line parallel to the two existing subaqueous power cables versus replacing the underwater lines. Two primary factors support the construction of an overhead line: cost and reliability. The cost to construct a new subaqueous cable is substantially higher than for an overhead line. Gulf Power Company examined other project alternatives, including trenching across St. Andrew Bay and rerouting the line to Tyndall AFB. These alternatives ranged from five to eight times the cost of the proposed overhead line to Military Point. Also, if a power failure to the Base occurred, the amount of time required to locate the problem and complete the applicable repairs would be significantly less for an overhead line as compared to a subaqueous cable. Because Tyndall AFB is a primary national defense facility for the southeastern U.S., a reliable source of electricity to the Base is essential.

1.3 Scope

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in accordance with the following federal regulatory requirements:

- ◆ Air Force Instruction (AFI) 32-7061, *Environmental Impact Analysis Process*.
- ◆ 32 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 989, *Environmental Impact Analysis Process*.
- ◆ Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) *Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)* (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508).
- ◆ Department of Defense (DOD) Directive 6051.1.

Generally, the Proposed Action would be classified as a routine repair or utility replacement within an existing utility right-of-way (ROW) easement using granted leases and rights of entry on Tyndall AFB, not requiring an assessment under NEPA. However, given specific resource issues, this EA addresses only the potential impacts that may affect federal lands at and near Military Point (see Map 1). Permitting requirements for other lands and the St. Andrew Bay crossing are beyond the scope of this EA.

If the environmental impacts examined for these key resources would have significantly affected the interdisciplinary resources, in accordance with CEQ's impact criteria (40 CFR Part 1508.27), an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would have been prepared before any commitment of resources associated with the Proposed Action occurred. However, impacts were deemed to be below the applicable significance thresholds in the Draft EA, and a *Finding of No Significant Impact* (FONSI) was issued. Gulf Power Company and Tyndall AFB may proceed with implementing the Proposed Action, although other state and federal permitting reviews do apply. Comments and responses received on the Draft EA are summarized in Appendix B of this Final EA.

1.4 Resource Disciplines Eliminated from Detailed Study

In accordance with NEPA, this analysis must address certain "Critical Elements of the Human Environment" that pertain to the Proposed Action and any viable project alternatives. The following disciplines were initially examined relative to the proposed project. However, given the small, limited nature of the Proposed Action at Military Point as a utility replacement located predominantly within an existing ROW easement, these resources were eliminated from detailed study, as outlined for each discipline. This elimination of nonrelevant issues follows CEQ's guidelines 40 CFR 1500.4.

1.4.1 *Geology*

No geological hazards, seismic risks, or unstable slopes occur in the vicinity of Military Point on Tyndall AFB. Therefore, the proposed project or alternatives would not be expected to adversely affect the local geologic features, nor would such features be expected to adversely affect the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative.

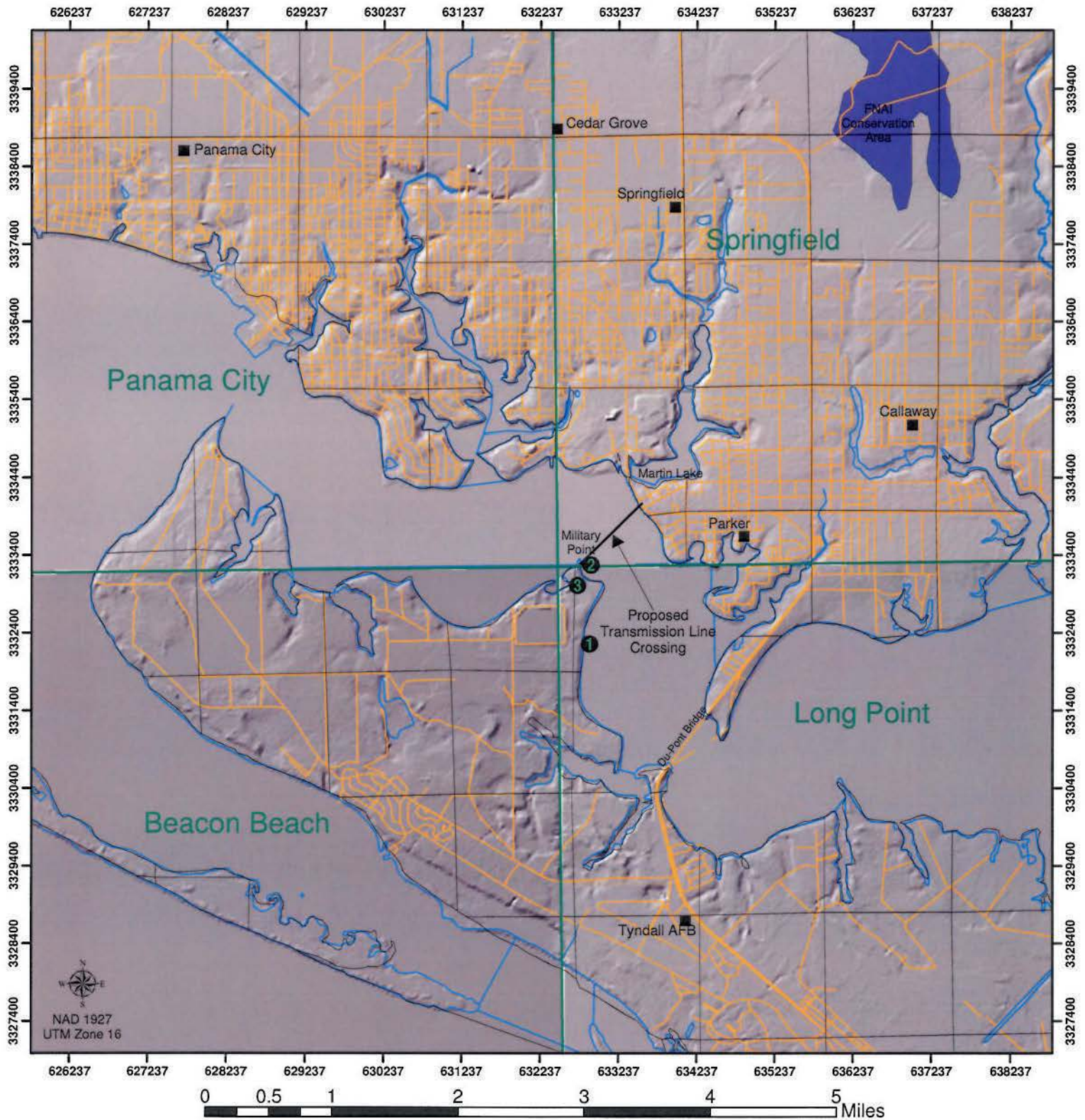
1.4.2 *Noise*

Noise levels associated with the Proposed Action would be characterized as that consistent with repair or replacement of existing utilities (i.e., 80 decibels at 6 feet). Noise would be intermittent, short-term in nature, and no long-term changes in ambient noise levels would occur from project operation. Similarly, no changes in noise level would occur under the No Action Alternative.

Map 1

Gulf Power Company

Military Point Transmission Line Project



MAP LEGEND

- | | | |
|--|-----------------|---------------------|
| ■ Cities | — Hydrography | □ PLSS (TRS) |
| ① Reference Numbers
(Numbers coincide with
photos in Appendix A) | — Roads/Streets | □ USGS Topo Quads |
| | | ■ Hillshade of DEMs |

1.4.3 Land Use

The Proposed Action would primarily encompass lands designated for "Developed Military (Mission) Activities" at Military Point. This land use on Tyndall AFB is defined as typically including, "buildings, roadways, airfields, and developed recreational areas" (Tyndall AFB 1999). Implementation of the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative would be in accordance with the existing land uses at Military Point and Gulf Power Company's existing utility ROW easement with Tyndall AFB. No effects to existing land use patterns or policies or planned land uses would occur.

1.4.4 Transportation

Access to Military Point for construction and operational activities under the Proposed Action would be by existing roads and Gulf Power Company's existing utility ROW. Temporary increases in construction vehicles would be in accordance with the Air Force's granted easement to repair and replace existing utilities on Base. No changes would occur under the No Action Alternative.

1.4.5 Socioeconomics

Line construction under the Proposed Action would be short-term in nature and not result in any additional long-term employment, change in property values, or population changes on or off Tyndall AFB. No changes to socioeconomic values would apply to the No Action Alternative.

1.4.6 Recreation

The closest established recreational trail near Military Point occurs approximately 0.9 mile to the southwest of the project area. Access to Military Point would be by existing roads and the Gulf Power Company's existing utility ROW. Therefore, the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative at Military Point would not alter or diminish recreational opportunities or activities or introduce additional access trails to Tyndall AFB.

1.4.7 Visual Resources

Aesthetics at Military Point would not be adversely affected with implementation of the Proposed Action. This project assessment is based on the presence of existing electrical infrastructure at the point, the location of the proposed project primarily within Gulf Power Company's existing 100-foot utility ROW, and the addition of the proposed interconnection equipment and structures would be in line with the existing designation for "Developed Military Activities" assigned to the existing 46kV transmission line that serves Tyndall AFB.

Although the scope of this EA focuses on activities on Air Force lands at Military Point, it is acknowledged that the aesthetics of an overhead power line crossing St. Andrew Bay was the main public concern. To address public concerns and questions, Gulf Power Company provided public notice for the proposed project, and the FDEP held a public meeting on July 7, 2003 in Panama City. Additionally, Gulf Power Company and the City of Parker held a number of meetings to discuss this project and its potential effects to surrounding residents.

The long-term aesthetics of the proposed transmission line crossing St. Andrew Bay was the primary topic of discussion during these meetings, and several project alternatives were examined and discussed, as summarized in Section 2.3, *Alternatives Considered But Eliminated from Detailed Analysis*. However, as a system customer, Tyndall AFB cannot dictate how energy demands are met, and as a public utility, Gulf Power Company is regulated by the Florida Public Service Commission and must abide by the rules and regulations that require that the most cost-practical and economically responsible approach be examined. As discussed in Section 2.3, review of the projected cost differences (five to eight times greater) and a potential increase in other environmental impacts that would result from implementation of these other alternatives resulted in the determination that installing the overhead line across St. Andrew Bay is the most feasible and practical method to maintain electrical reliability and increase electrical supply, as needed.

1.4.8 Cultural Resources

No known prehistoric or historic cultural site is located in the area of Military Point, based on Tyndall AFB's Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan (Tyndall AFB 2003), although this is designated as a high probability area for finding such sites. The majority of the project would be located within Gulf Power Company's existing 100-foot ROW and it would have to comply with the Standard Operating Procedure 13 in the Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan, accordingly.

1.4.9 Infrastructure/Utilities

The proposed additional utilities and infrastructure of the Proposed Action would be in accordance with Tyndall AFB's standard utility repair and replacement actions within existing ROW easements. No changes to existing Base infrastructure or utilities would occur under the No Action Alternative.

1.4.10 Hazardous Materials and Wastes

Any hazardous materials or wastes generated from implementation of the Proposed Action would be handled and disposed of in accordance with the existing ROW easement policies and agreement between Tyndall AFB and Gulf Power Company for utility repair and replacement. No issues for hazardous materials or wastes would apply to the No Action Alternative.

1.4.11 Environmental Justice

Pursuant to Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, the project was reviewed relative to potential adverse health or environmental effects to minority or low-income populations. Upon careful analysis, no minority or low-income group would be unfairly treated or unduly burdened by implementing the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative. Thus, environmental justice is not an issue.

1.5 Required Federal and State Permits, Licenses, and Notifications

Gulf Power Company's application for the required environmental permits was submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) on May 20, 2002 and revised July 5, 2002 (FDEP 2003). FDEP (2003) issued a *Permit Application Appraisal and Consolidated Notice of Intent to Issue Wetland*

Resource Permit and Authorization to Use Sovereign Submerged Lands on September 15, 2003 (File No. 03-0199524-001-DF). The *Permit Application Appraisal* addressed the associated biological and water quality assessment pertaining to the entire project, encompassing the St. Andrew Bay crossing and the power interconnection at Military Point. However, since no wetlands would be affected at Military Point (which is within the scope of this EA), this Appraisal primarily pertains to the St. Andrew Bay crossing. The Appraisal states,

"Water quality standards as found in Chapter 62-302, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) will be protected by general and specific conditions of the permit such as turbidity screens and turbidity monitoring. No water quality standards are expected to be violated."

"Wetland resources have been identified and impacts have been avoided or minimized. This project is not expected to adversely affect water quality and is not contrary to the public interest. It meets the permitting criteria of Chapters 62-312 and 18-21 F.A.C.; therefore, [FDEP] recommend[s] issuance of an Intent to Issue a Consolidated Wetland Resource Permit and Intent to Grant Authorization for Sovereign Submerged Lands (public easement.)"

This FDEP's *Consolidated Notice of Intent to Issue Wetland Resource Permit and Authorization to Use Sovereign Submerged Lands* addressing the St. Andrew Bay crossing similarly states:

"The Department of Environmental Protection gives consolidated notice of its intent to:

(a) issue a wetland resource permit under Part IV of Chapter 373, Florida Statutes (F.S.), and Title 62, Florida Administrative Code... Issuance of the wetland resource permit also constitutes certification of compliance with state water quality standards pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. 1341.

(b) grant a public easement to use sovereign submerged lands for the proposed activity, under Article X, Section 11 of the Florida Constitution, Chapter 253, F.S. and Title 18, F.A.C....

...issuance of the wetland resource permit also constitutes a finding of consistency with Florida's Coastal Zone Management Program, as required by Section 307 of the Coastal Management Act."

Tyndall AFB also has submitted a Biological Assessment (BA) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for review under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) has similarly reviewed the project relative to sensitive species' issues.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Description of the Proposed Action

Gulf Power Company is proposing to construct a new aerial (overhead) 46kV transmission line to serve Tyndall AFB. The 3,555-foot-long transmission line would cross St. Andrew Bay from a point near Parker, Florida at Highway 98 on the north side of the bay, terminating at Military Point on Tyndall AFB. This site is located in T4S, R14W, S14 and 23, approximately 1.3 miles northwest of the Dupont Bridge and east of the Smurfit-Stone Paper Mill. Map 1 depicts this crossing site, and representative photographs of these areas are presented in Appendix A.

2.1.1 *Line Construction*

Construction of the new transmission line would encompass placing four single-pole, steel structures with concrete foundations in the bay (see Figure 1 and Map 2). The overhead line would run parallel to the existing subaqueous cables that serve Tyndall AFB. In order to minimize the amount of new construction activities on land, both the north and south ends of the line would tie directly into Gulf Power Company's existing electrical infrastructure.

There would be two circuits, one on either side of the structures (see Figure 1). The line would initially function as a 46kV transmission line, but it would be built to 115kV standards in anticipation of future growth in electrical demands at Tyndall AFB. Because the line would be built to the larger 115kV electrical capacity, the distance between conductors and the pole would be greater than those required for a 46kV line. The increased distance would eliminate the potential electrocution risk to birds, which is discussed in greater detail in the *Military Point 115kV Transmission Line Avian Impact Assessment* (EDM 2004) and *Gulf Power Company Military Point Transmission Line Project Biological Assessment* (Tyndall AFB 2004) (see Section 4.1.6 of this EA).

Only the four single-pole, concrete foundation structures that would be located in St. Andrew Bay would involve dredge or fill activities associated with "Waters of the State." All other project components (e.g., new structures on either end of this line segment) would be located above the mean high water line. In accordance with Gulf Power Company's committed environmental protection measures (see Section 2.1.4) and the FDEP's applicable permits (see Section 1.5), all bay bottom material removed from within the hollow caissons would be contained so as not to discharge into the bay during construction of the four concrete foundations. Turbidity screens would be positioned around each of the foundations as they are built so as to minimize turbidity. Turbidity sampling also would be conducted prior to and during construction.

The four bay structures would be located to avoid sea grass beds. No other live bottom resources would be intersected by structure placement within the bay. To provide additional osprey nest sites and encourage nesting in appropriate locations on the transmission line structures (i.e., away from the conductors), osprey nesting platforms are proposed for the top of each of the four poles located in the bay.

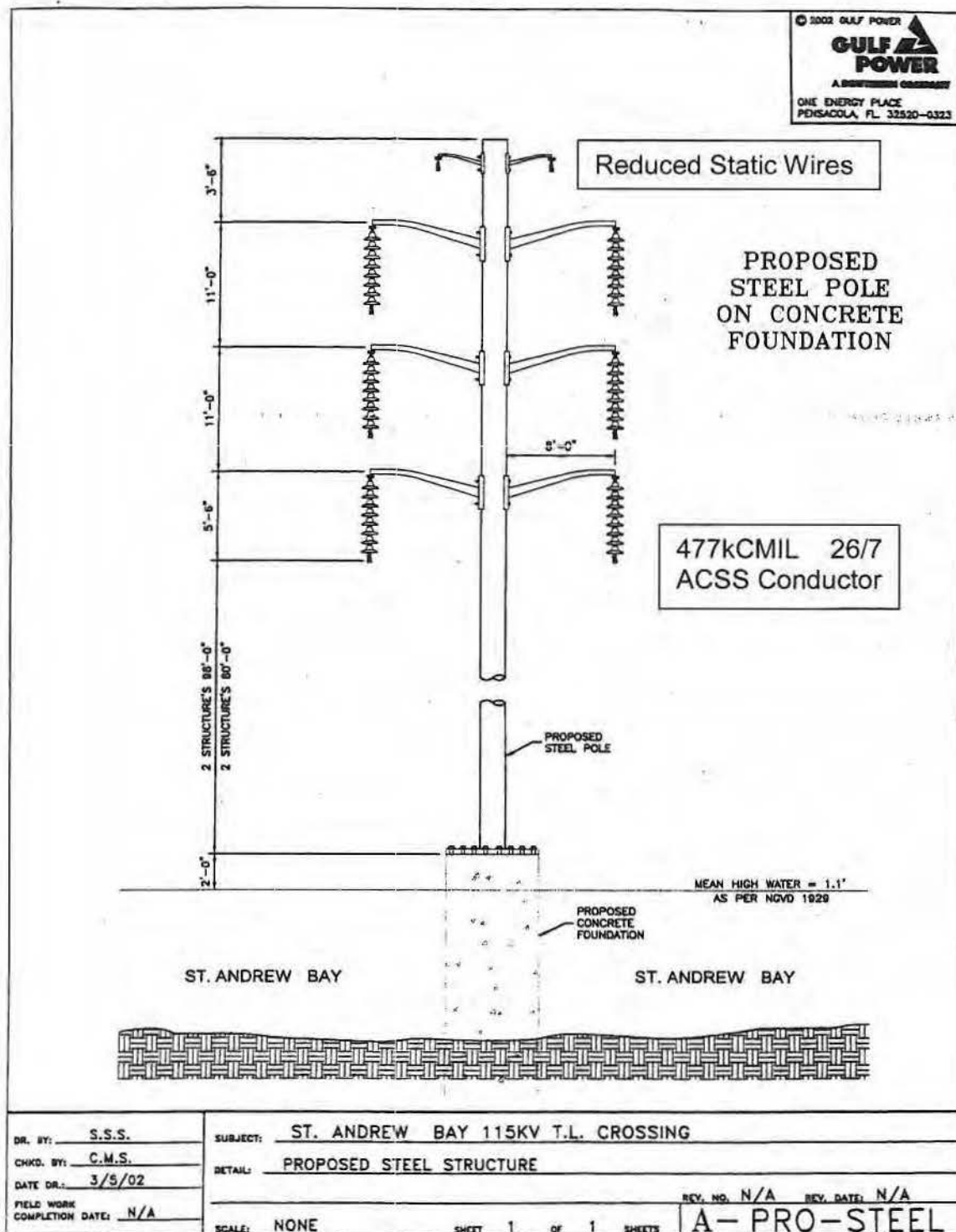


Figure 1 St. Andrew Bay Proposed Transmission Line Structure Configuration

Map 2
Proposed and Existing 46kV Transmission Lines at Military Point



Relative to navigational requirements for St. Andrew Bay, the new transmission line has been designed to meet and/or exceed the U.S. Coast Guard's required vertical and horizontal clearances over the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. At the southern terminus at Military Point, the new line would attach to two single, concrete pole structures that would be located above the mean high water line. From that point, the line would connect to the existing 46kV transmission line, which currently serves Tyndall AFB.

Because the existing subaqueous cables are still functioning, they would serve as a backup to the new overhead transmission line. To facilitate this, a new switch system would be constructed on land directly south of where the subaqueous cables presently transition into an overhead line at Military Point (i.e., the southern terminus of the subaqueous cables) (see Map 1). This location also coincides with where the new overhead line would tie into the existing 46kV power line. The new aerial line would serve as the primary source of power to Tyndall AFB. However, should service from the overhead line be interrupted for some reason, it would be possible to temporarily switch over to the subaqueous cables until power was restored.

In order to be able to switch between the new aerial line (which again would be the primary power supply to Tyndall AFB) and the existing subaqueous cables, it would be necessary to construct four new switches. This switch system would provide even greater flexibility and protection for power to Tyndall AFB. These switches would be located in proximity to the existing electrical structures at Military Point (see Map 2 and Photos 2 and 3 in Appendix A). A total of 10 new, single-pole structures would be required for the new switch system; all would be placed within the existing 100-foot-wide ROW for the existing 46kV aerial line that currently serves Tyndall AFB. It should be noted that of those 10 new structures, 2 poles would replace 2 existing structures.

In order to attempt to protect the switching equipment from possible vandalism, a chain link fence would be constructed around the switches. This fenced-in area would be approximately 80x160 feet (.3 acre). The fence would be built to Gulf Power Company's substation standards, including an 8-foot-tall fence topped with 3 feet of barbed wire. All of the switch equipment and fence would be located within the footprint of the existing 100-foot-wide power line ROW.

The only new structures that would be placed outside of the existing 100-foot-wide power line ROW easement would be the two new concrete poles that the new transmission line would connect to on land at Military Point. Gulf Power Company has obtained the associated easement for the location of those two shoreline structures. Those two structures, at 67 feet tall, would be the tallest of all the new structures on the southern terminus of the project. All of the other new structures would be no taller than the existing structures currently in place as part of the existing 46kV line to Tyndall AFB (see Photo 3 in Appendix A).

Line construction is expected to take approximately 4 months to complete. In accordance with federal and state guidelines to protect active bald eagle nest sites, the construction period for the Military Point area would be limited to between May 15 and October 1, 2004 (as discussed in Section 4.1.6 of this EA).

An estimated 40 to 45 construction personnel would be required for line construction over this 4-month period. However, workers occurring onsite at any one time would typically range from 8 to 10 personnel.

Access to Military Point (to construct the switch system and connect to the existing power line) would be via an existing access road on Tyndall AFB. Equipment that would be used for this line construction would include: pickup and flatbed trucks, an all-terrain crane, backhoe/front-end loader, bucket trucks, forklift, wire stringing equipment, air compressor, water truck, and a tractor trailer.

2.1.2 Line Operation

During project operation, access to the transmission line segment and ancillary facilities at Military Point would be sporadic. Unless problems are detected on the system, Gulf Power Company's normal inspection cycle would be every 6 years.

2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed overhead 46kV transmission line and ancillary facilities would not be constructed across St. Andrew Bay to Military Point on AFB. Electrical power to Tyndall AFB would continue to be delivered via the existing subaqueous cables beneath the bay, affecting the electrical reliability and capacity of the Base, potentially resulting in electrical demand exceeding the available capacity as early as 2004. Without implementation of the Proposed Action, the Air Force mission to introduce the F/A-22 Raptor and build up of First Air Force (1 AF) to Tyndall AFB would be severely limited. Although implementation of the No Action Alternative would not meet Tyndall AFB's current mission, the project alternative will be analyzed in this EA to provide a baseline for comparison to the Proposed Action.

2.3 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

In accordance with NEPA, the EA must analyze feasible project alternatives (i.e., those alternatives that support operational, technical, or environmental standards that are suitable to a particular project). Gulf Power Company examined other alternatives to provide additional power to Tyndall AFB to support the Base's future missions and objectives. The following four alternatives were determined not to be viable, based on a number of associated factors, which are discussed for each option considered but eliminated from detailed analysis in this EA.

2.3.1 Cable Replacement

Replacing the two existing subaqueous cables with other power cables beneath St. Andrew Bay would require embedding the cable across the bay bottom. This underwater option would cost an estimated five times as much as an overhead line and would directly impact sensitive sea grass beds identified by pre-construction surveys (ECT 2002).

2.3.2 Dupont Bridge Alignment

Another project alternative examined was to attach a new power line to the Dupont Bridge, conditional upon the review by the Florida Department of Transportation. This option would result in a route seven times longer and eight times costlier than the proposed route across St. Andrew Bay at Military Point. Transmission line construction across Highways 30 and 30A also would be required to access the bridge. In addition, this ROW alignment would either cross or travel adjacent to Pearl Bayou on Tyndall AFB in order to access the Military Point Substation, thereby increasing environmental effects from project construction and operation.

2.3.3 Directional Boring

Directional boring under St. Andrew Bay is not advisable from an engineering perspective, since the distance between the north and south shorelines is greater than 3,000 feet. The underground casing would need to be filled with sand grout to fill any voids within the casing and provide thermal insulation for the electric cable. Lengths greater than 3,000 feet would be difficult to fill, given the high pressures required to force the grout the entire length of the cable casing.

2.3.4 Conservation

Power conservation would not be sufficient to meet the future anticipated needs at Tyndall AFB. The planned base expansions to support the F/A-22 Raptor and First Air Force Programs would significantly exceed the currently available power capacity beyond feasible power savings through conservation measures.

2.4 Committed Environmental Protection Measures

Based on Gulf Power Company's standard construction methods and approaches, the results from biological data obtained from project surveys and site reviews (ECT 2002; EDM 2003, 2004), and ongoing dialog with the applicable regulatory and resource management agencies (e.g., USACE, USFWS, Tyndall AFB, FFWCC, FDEP), Gulf Power Company has committed to a number of protection measures to avoid or minimize potential effects to sensitive resources associated with the Military Point Transmission Line Project. These protection measures include the following:

- ◆ Minimize potential turbidity and prevent discharge of bottom material into the water column using appropriate construction methods for structure placement within St. Andrew Bay.
- ◆ Avoid native sea grass beds by specific pole placement within St. Andrew Bay.
- ◆ Propose placing osprey nesting platforms for the top of each of the four poles located in the bay to encourage any nesting attempts away from the davit arms and conductors, thereby minimizing future contamination issues and potential increase in line faults.
- ◆ Access Military Point on Tyndall AFB by existing access roads; avoid constructing any new roads or access trails.
- ◆ Adhere to all of the conditions contained in the FDEP (2003) *Permit Application Appraisal and Consolidated Notice of Intent to Issue Wetland Resource Permit and Authorization to Use Sovereign Submerged Lands* (see Section 1.5), as well as those in the applicable USACE Nationwide permit (typically NW 12) that cover the construction or maintenance of power lines.
- ◆ Ensure that the project is in compliance with Florida's Coastal Zone Management Program (see Sections 1.5 and 4.1.8).
- ◆ Ensure that project construction activities occur outside of jurisdictional wetlands.

- ◆ Where necessary, use mats and/or low ground pressure equipment in applicable areas to minimize impacts to surface soils.
- ◆ Use silt screens, where appropriate, to prevent turbidity exceedances in downstream water bodies.
- ◆ Prohibit human-related activities (e.g., line construction) within the designated 750-foot and 1,500-foot Bald Eagle Primary and Secondary Nesting Zones, respectively, between October 1 and May 15. If necessary, establish a biological monitor to determine when the young eagles have fledged or when the adults may return to the nest, depending on the construction schedule and breeding chronology. Coordinate with the USFWS and FFWCC on this schedule and monitoring program, if warranted (Tyndall AFB 2004).
- ◆ Install appropriate marking devices on the new transmission line's overhead static wires across St. Andrew Bay and on the existing transmission lines' overhead static wires located within 1,500 feet of the active bald eagle nest site to minimize potential avian collision risks along these line segments, as detailed in EDM (2004) and Tyndall AFB (2004).
- ◆ Install specific perch deterrents on the switching equipment proposed for Military Point, and retrofit the two existing electric riser structures and two vertical deadend structures at Military Point to minimize the electrocution risk to birds, as detailed in EDM (2004) and Tyndall AFB (2004).
- ◆ Plan and implement standard line maintenance activities located within 1,500 feet of the active nest site to avoid the breeding season (October 1 to May 15), except if emergency repair were warranted. In the event that human health and safety were at risk and emergency repair activities were required within 1,500 feet of the active eagle nest site, Gulf Power Company would document the justification for entry into this restricted area and notify the USFWS and FFWCC as soon as practicable.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Air Quality

The air quality standards that the Proposed Action must follow include the federal standards of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Air Quality Control Region 005 and the state rules regulated by the FDEP. Terrain and prevailing meteorological conditions influence air quality. Ground-based inversions frequently occur on Tyndall AFB due to differences in ambient air temperatures and light wind speeds.

The mean annual temperature is about 70°F, and the mean annual precipitation is about 60 inches (NRCS 2004). The overall air quality on Tyndall AFB is considered to be good, and the Base is in attainment for National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), which are regulated by the FDEP.

3.2 Water Quality

Surface water runoff from precipitation on Tyndall AFB is collected and conveyed by drainage ditches that flow toward both the Gulf of Mexico and East Bay. No natural, fresh-water streams occur in the vicinity of Military Point. The relatively flat terrain minimizes potential soil erosion and off-site sedimentation into natural streams located on the Base. The Proposed Action would be constructed above the mean high water line of St. Andrew Bay where water quality standards are regulated by both the USACE and FDEP.

3.3 Soils

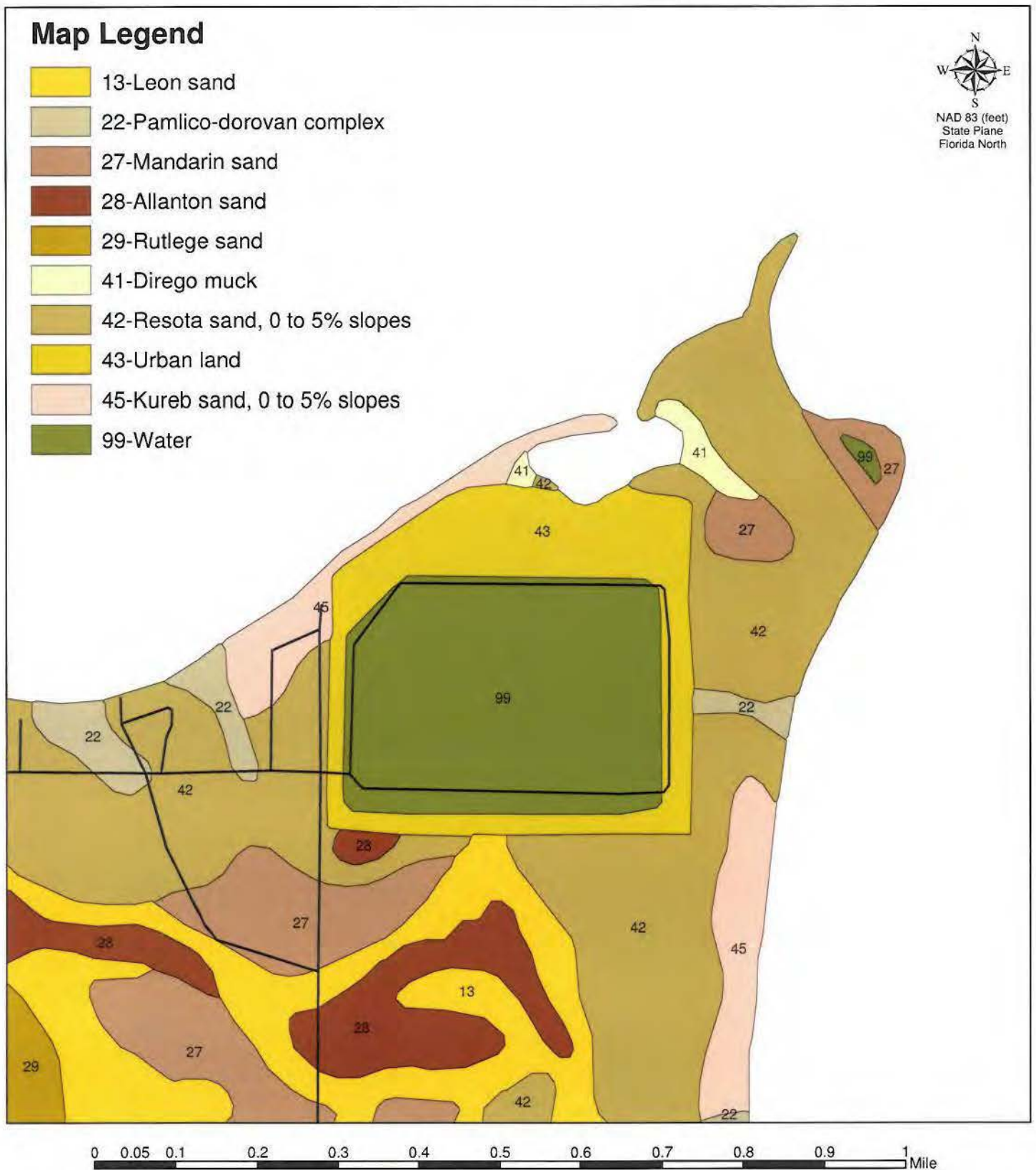
Military Point encompasses part of the sandy ridges next to the Gulf classified as the Kureb-Resota-Mandarin soil association. This association is described as "nearly level to gently sloping, excessively drained, moderately well drained, and somewhat poorly drained soils that are sandy to a depth of 80 inches or more; some have organic stained sandy layers" (Duffee et al. 1984).

Figure 2 shows the site-specific soil types in the vicinity of Military Point (Tyndall AFB 1999). The entire northernmost tip of Military Point consists of the Resota fine sand. The Resota soil series consists of very deep, moderately well drained, very rapidly permeable soils on broad, moderately high ridges in the coastal plain. They formed in thick beds of sandy marine deposits. Slopes range from 0 to 5% (NRCS 2004).

3.4 Vegetation

Two predominant environments comprise Tyndall AFB, including coastal margins and interior uplands. The coastal areas encompass sandy beaches and dunes, bayous, and tidal marshes. The interior habitats include moderately well-drained and gently sloping hammock uplands, wet prairies, floodplains, freshwater lakes, and established wetlands (Tyndall AFB 1999).

Figure 2
Soil Types in the Vicinity of Military Point
Tyndall Air Force Base



Source: Tyndall AFB 1999

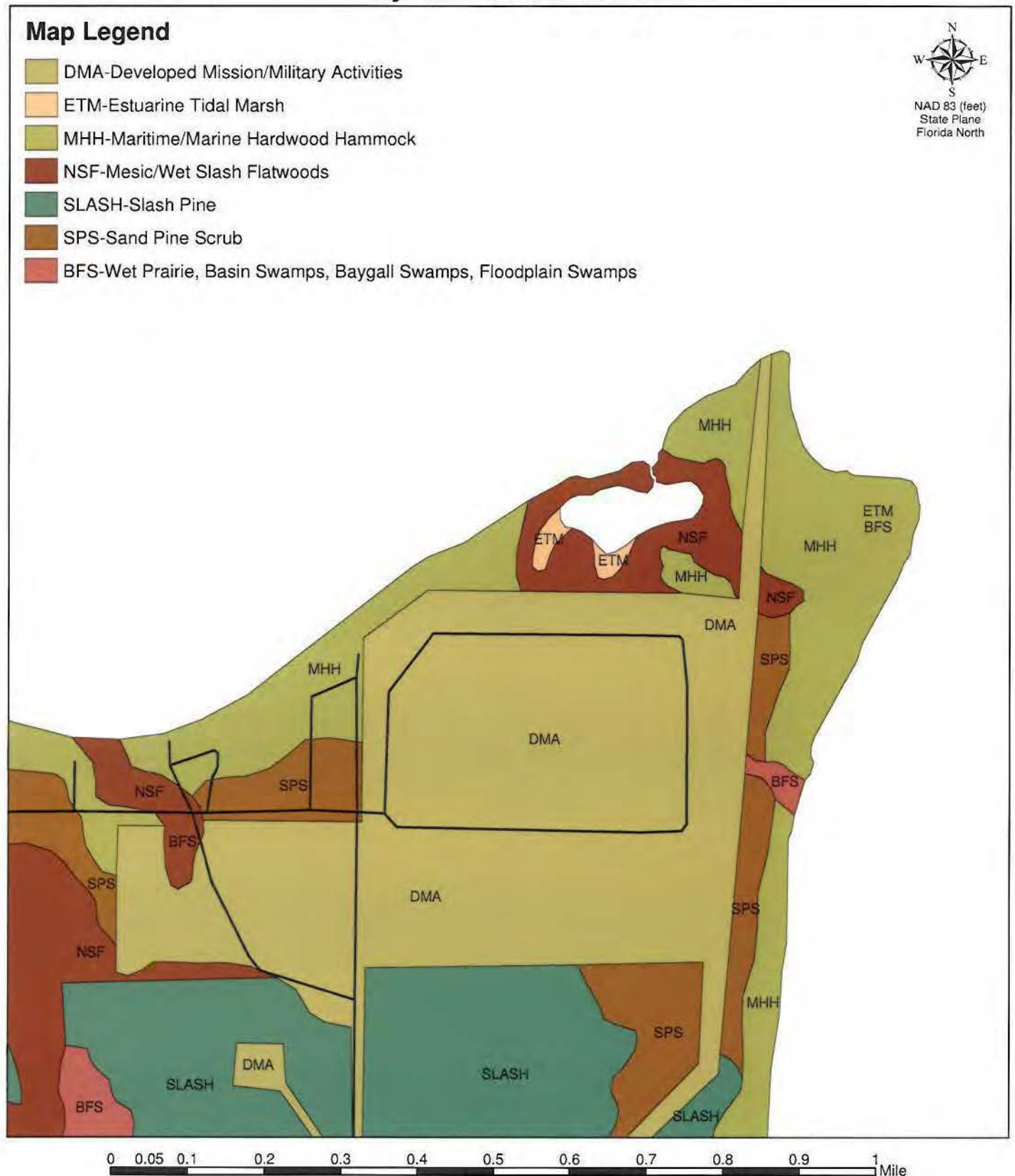
In 2002, both aquatic and terrestrial surveys were conducted for the proposed ROW alignment across St. Andrew Bay and for the origination and terminus points on either side of the bay, respectively (ECT 2002). These surveys examined the bottom substrate of the ROW alignment within the bay, the terrestrial habitat features along both the north and south shorelines, and the potential for sensitive plant or animal species to occur in the area. Detailed survey results are presented in the *Ecological Survey Report on the Proposed Gulf Power Company St. Andrew Bay Transmission Line Crossing* (ECT 2002).

The submerged lands under the proposed power line in St. Andrew Bay consist primarily of sand bottom with isolated beds of sea grasses, such as shoal weed (*Halodule wrightii*) and turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*), established in shallow water reaches along the shorelines. The deeper water between the grass beds contains bare sand and shell fragments. The intertidal area along the shoreline is bare sand. The shoreline at Military Point is dominated by manatee grass (*Syringodium filiforme*) that extends to a water depth of about 5.5 feet. No oyster beds or hard bottom habitats were observed at the shoreline. Also along the shoreline, a narrow strip of coastal marsh vegetation occurs, consisting of marsh hay cordgrass (*Spartina patens*), sea purslane (*Sesuvium portulacastrum*), and seashore drop seed (*Sporobolus virginicus*). Sea myrtle (*Baccharis halimifolia*) and big leaf sumpweed (*Iva frutescens*) occur more landward (ECT 2002).

General vegetative cover types at Military Point are shown in Figure 3 (Tyndall AFB 1999). The land use for the existing transmission line ROW corridor that travels south from Military Point is classified as being for "Developed Mission/Military Activities." This land use category is generally defined as including buildings, roadways, airfields, and developed recreational areas (Tyndall AFB 1999). Map 2 shows these developed areas located at and near Military Point. Lands immediately east and west of this ROW corridor consists of native Maritime (Marine) Hardwood Hammock, which is typically hardwood forest that occurs inland from coastal communities. On Tyndall AFB, the Maritime Hardwood Hammock is primarily a community assemblage of live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), cabbage palmetto (*Sabal palmetto*), southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*), way myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), and saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) (Tyndall AFB 1999).

Photo 1 in Appendix A is representative of the native vegetation located along Tyndall AFB. At Military Point, a narrow beach extends along the shoreline adjacent to a narrow zone of coastal marsh vegetation. The upland hammock vegetation is relatively intact adjacent to the existing transmission line ROW. Photo 3 shows the vegetation immediately surrounding the existing electrical infrastructure at Military Point. Photo 5 provides an overview of the existing power line ROW that travels south from Military Point. Map 2 provides an aerial overview of these areas, the associated vegetative cover, and the extent of existing developed (i.e., disturbed) areas at and near Military Point.

Figure 3
Vegetative Cover in the Vicinity of Military Point
Tyndall Air Force Base



Source: Tyndall AFB 1999

3.5 Wildlife

Tyndall AFB is somewhat unique in that it has retained a number of more remote, high-quality habitats, while the Base is in close proximity to urban areas, requiring a high level of balance between resource protection and urban pressures. Tyndall AFB encompasses two primary environments: coastal and interior. The coastal area includes sand dunes, beaches, bayous, and tidal marshes. The interior area has moderately well-drained, gently sloping uplands with poorly drained Flatwoods and wetlands. A number of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife species occupy these habitats on Tyndall AFB. The Base's INRMP (Tyndall AFB 1999) summarizes these species that occur throughout the varied habitat types, and ECT (2002) and EDM (2003) outlines area wildlife species observed during the biological surveys completed for this project at and near Military Point.

Specific to Military Point, representative wildlife species that are likely to occur at or near the project area would include white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), eastern gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), other small- and medium-sized mammals, a variety of reptilian and amphibian species, and a large diversity of water and terrestrial bird species (Tyndall AFB 1999). Although a number of native wildlife may utilize the habitats occurring at and near Military Point, the amount of existing infrastructure and surface disturbance in this immediate area reduces the overall habitat values, as compared to the more remote and diverse habitats found elsewhere on Tyndall AFB, particularly along the marine and terrestrial interface and between the freshwater aquatic and upland areas on the Base's peninsula.

3.6 Threatened and Endangered Species

Tyndall AFB's INRMP (Tyndall AFB 1999) outlines a number of sensitive plant and animal species that historically occurred or may presently occur on the base. Initially, field surveys (ECT 2002) and discussions with regulatory agency biologists did not reveal any federally or state-listed species associated with the proposed project. However, in November 2003, Tyndall AFB and local bird specialists reported an active bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) nest near Military Point that was previously undocumented. The bald eagle is currently federally listed as threatened. This active nest discovery initiated informal consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for the proposed project.

Bald eagles occur throughout the St. Andrew Bay area, including Tyndall AFB. Historically, bald eagle nesting has been documented on and near the base (Mobley 2003; FFWCC 2003a), and individuals forage along the coastal and interior habitats in this region and along the entire peninsula (Lamb 2004). The Audubon Christmas Bird Counts for Bay County show a small but steady increase in the number of bald eagles observed annually, 3 to 11 birds recorded during the annual survey date from 1999 through 2003 (Audubon 2003). In addition, monitoring by Tyndall AFB and local bird specialists reflect an overall increase in bald eagle numbers year-round (Mobley 2003; Houser 2003; Lamb 2004).

To date, four active bald eagle nests have been documented on Tyndall AFB (Mobley 2003). Although in Florida, bald eagle nests are typically located in tall, living pine or cypress trees (FFWCC 2003b), the eagle nest near Military Point is unusual in that it is located in a dead snag (see Photo 4 in Appendix A). Adult eagles established this nest site in close proximity to the existing transmission line ROWs that travel south from Military Point (see Photo 5 in Appendix A) and the existing electrical equipment located along the shoreline at Military Point, where the subaqueous cables currently transition to overhead structures (see Map 2 and

Photo 3 in Appendix A). An artificial nesting platform for osprey also is located at Military Point (see Photo 3 in Appendix A).

Although there has been no formal previous documentation of young eagles fledging from this nest site, field notes from Tyndall AFB staff (Mobley 2003; Lamb 2004) and local bird specialists (Houser 2003; Lamb 2004) infer that the nest has likely been occupied and/or active for at least 3 years. Over the past 3 years, juvenile, subadult, and adult bald eagles have been observed in the vicinity of the nest site; however, only one young eagle was recorded at any one time (Lamb 2004). The number of bald eagle sightings during the nesting season recorded for Military Point and the nest area (Lamb 2004) further support the assumption that this nest is relatively new but is likely active each year and successfully fledging young eagles.

No other active eagle nests occur near the proposed project area at Military Point. In addition, no historic or communal bald eagle roost sites are known to occur in the vicinity of the proposed project (Sullivan 2003).

3.7 Floodplains and Wetlands

Flooding can be a concern at Tyndall AFB. Tropical storms and hurricanes not only produce torrential rainfall, but tidal surges also can cause flooding. Figure 4 shows flood hazard zones for the Military Point vicinity (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA] 2004). Two flood hazard zones occur at Military Point, Zone AE and Zone VE. Zone AE represents the 1% annual chance floodplain. Zone VE represents the 1% annual chance coastal floodplain, with additional hazards associated with storm waves.

Wetlands comprise about 40% of the land on Tyndall AFB. Approximately 100 types of wetlands have been combined into three basic types or categories: Palustrine, Forested Palustrine, and Aquatic/Emergent and Estuarine. The most predominant wetland type present on Tyndall AFB is Palustrine Forested (Tyndall AFB 1999). Figure 5 shows wetlands in the vicinity of Military Point (USFWS 1999). This map indicates an Estuarine, Intertidal wetland located at the northernmost tip on Military Point.

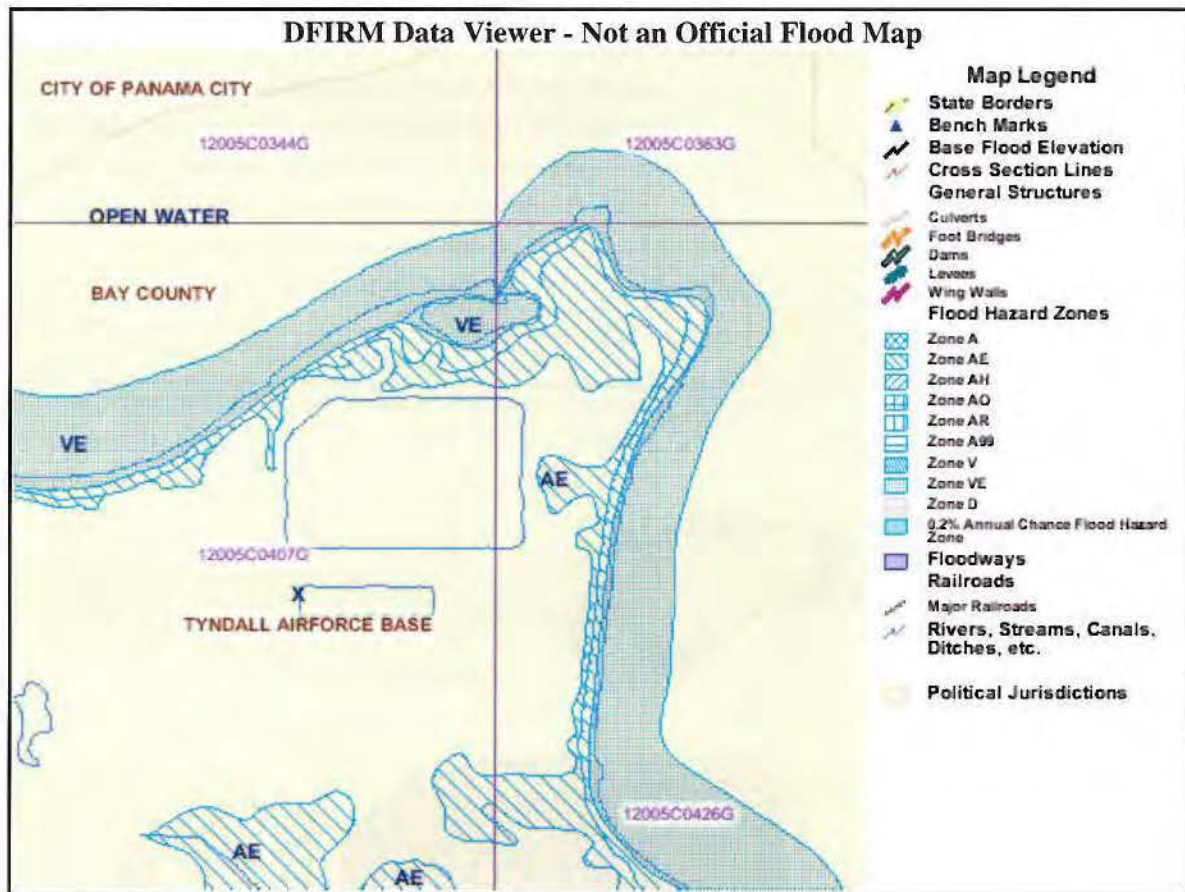
3.8 Coastal Zone Management Program

The Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 was amended through P.L. 104-150 to the Coastal Zone Protection Act of 1996 (FDEP 2004). This Act was enacted to preserve, protect, develop, restore, and enhance the coastal zone resources, where possible. The federal Act also encouraged coastal states to develop and implement comprehensive management programs to balance coastal resource protection with economic growth and development. In response, Florida developed the Florida Coastal Zone Management Program administered by the FDEP. This program is comprised of a consortium of agencies implementing a total of 23 statutes that protect and enhance the state's natural, cultural, and economic coastal resources. Overall, the program's goal is to coordinate local, state, and federal agency activities to ensure that Florida's coast is protected in the long term (FDEP 2004).

The 23 statutes outlined by the state's program range among a number of environmental, ecological, and human-related concerns identified for the Florida coastal zone. Since Section 307(c) of the federal Coastal Zone Management Act requires that federal agencies show consistency with state management programs (i.e., the federal consistency review), the

Proposed Action was analyzed in reference to the state program and references to each of these 23 statutes have been included as part of this EA's analyses (see Section 4.1.8).

Figure 4
Floodplain Map in the Vicinity of Military Point
Tyndall Air Force Base



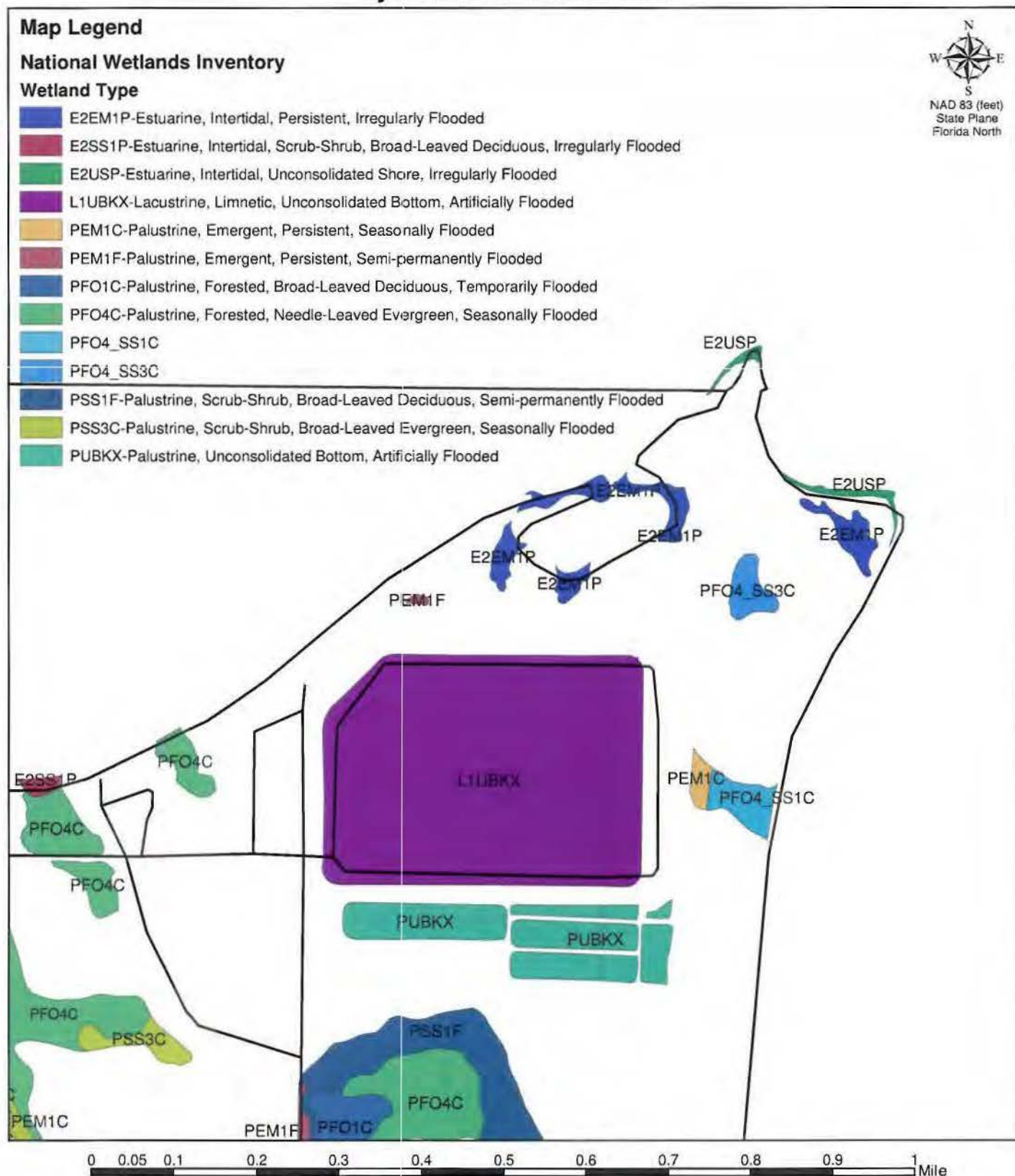
Source: FEMA 2004

Flood Hazard Zone Descriptions

Zone AE: 1% annual chance floodplain

Zone VE: 1% annual chance coastal floodplain
 (with additional hazards associated with storm waves)

Figure 5
Wetlands in the Vicinity of Military Point
Tyndall Air Force Base



Source: Tyndall AFB 1999

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.1 Proposed Action

4.1.1 *Air Quality*

Implementation of the Proposed Action would result in temporary, minor increases in exhaust emissions in the immediate vicinity of the construction area at Military Point. An incremental increase in particulates from fugitive dust also may occur from equipment access to and from the construction site. However, Gulf Power Company's standard construction practices utilize water trucks to minimize dust during surface clearing, line construction activities, and vehicle travel, as stated in the committed environmental protection measures in Section 2.4. Given the small number of construction equipment and short construction window, any increase in emissions and particulates would be expected to be short-term and temporary in nature and limited to the construction phase of the project. Site maintenance and patrol activities by Gulf Power Company personnel during line operation would not increase area emissions or particulates. Therefore, no significant direct or indirect impacts to regional air quality would be anticipated from either project construction or operation.

4.1.2 *Water Quality*

At the southern terminus at Military Point, the new transmission line would attach to two single, concrete pole structures that would be located above the mean high water line. From that point, the line would connect to the existing 46kV transmission line, which currently serves Tyndall AFB. The additional switching poles that would be constructed at Military Point also would be erected above the mean high water line. According to Gulf Power Company's committed environmental protection measures outlined in Section 2.4, potential adverse impacts to surface water quality would be minimized or avoided.

Although the removal of some vegetation at Military Point could increase surface run-off and sheet erosion, Gulf Power Company has committed to avoid jurisdictional wetlands and must follow all of the conditions contained in the FDEP (2003) *Permit Application Appraisal and Consolidated Notice of Intent to Issue Wetland Resource Permit and Authorization to Use Sovereign Submerged Lands* (see Section 1.5), as well as those in the applicable USACE Nationwide permit that cover the construction or maintenance of power lines. As summarized in Section 1.5, the FDEP's *Permit Application Appraisal* for this project states, "Water quality standards as found in Chapter 62-302, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) will be protected by general and specific conditions of the permit such as turbidity screens and turbidity monitoring. No water quality standards are expected to be violated."

In addition, the company's standard construction practices to minimize soil erosion, such as the use silt screens, where appropriate, would prevent offsite siltation and turbidity exceedances in downstream water bodies. Spill prevention or control measures would be implemented to prevent contaminants (e.g., diesel fuel) from migrating off site during equipment refueling, in accordance with Gulf Power Company's standard construction practices. No direct or indirect effects would be anticipated from project operation. In summary, no significant impacts to surface water quality at Military Point would be expected from the construction or operation of the Proposed Action.

Although the water quality issues potentially associated with the St. Andrew Bay crossing are outside the scope of this EA, Gulf Power Company has committed to minimize potential turbidity and prevent discharge of bottom material into the water column by using appropriate construction methods for structure placement within St. Andrew Bay (see Sections 2.1.1 and 2.4). Turbidity sampling also would be conducted prior to and during construction to ensure the applicable protection measures are effective, in accordance with the applicable FDEP permit requirements (FDEP 2003).

4.1.3 Soils

The Proposed Action would disturb less than 1 acre of soils from project construction. The new interconnection and switching poles to be erected at Military Point would intersect with the Resota sand soil type. This soil is moderately well drained, nearly level, ranging from 0 to 5% slopes. Permeability is very rapid, organic matter is low, and soil fertility is limited (NRCS 2004; Duffee et al. 1984).

Given this sandy soil's properties, few impacts to soils would be anticipated from construction and operation of the Proposed Project. The potential for increased erosion and sedimentation rates would be low, and no loss of productivity during construction from soil disturbance would be expected. In addition, Gulf Power Company has committed to a number of environmental protection measures to minimize environmental effects to natural resources from project construction (see Section 2.4). Specific to soils, protective mats and/or low ground pressure equipment would be used if any sensitive areas were encountered within the locations that would be disturbed by project construction to minimize potential surface erosion. These measures would be in accordance with Gulf Power Company's standard construction practices.

4.1.4 Vegetation

As stated in Section 2.4, Gulf Power Company also has committed to avoid the natural sea grass beds in St. Andrew Bay. Although the bay crossing is outside of the scope of this EA, other environmental protection measures apply to this crossing and are outlined in Section 2.4 and in accordance with the FDEP permits (FDEP 2003).

Less than 1 acre of vegetation would be removed or disturbed by site construction. Although Figure 3 shows the Marine Hardwood Hammock vegetative cover associated with Military Point, where the proposed transmission line would interconnect with the existing electrical infrastructure native woody vegetation is limited. Photo 3 in Appendix A shows the relative cover near the existing riser structures. Where the new ROW would interconnect with the existing ROW is immediately south, as depicted on Map 2. Photo 2 in Appendix A provides a general overview of this area that would be disturbed, which is on the edge of the upland hardwood hammock. A conservative estimate would be approximately 0.5 acre of shrub and grasses and less than 0.5 acre of hardwoods would be disturbed from construction of the transmission line and its associated switching poles. No wetland or coastal marsh vegetation would be removed or affected by implementation of the Proposed Action. Pole placement and ROW clearing would not intersect with either of these sensitive vegetation types.

4.1.5 Wildlife

The short- and long-term habitat effects that would occur from implementation of the Proposed Action at Military Point would be small and insignificant, given the limited amount of native

vegetation that would be removed by project construction (less than 1 acre). Of the 1 acre potentially affected by project construction, the area cleared for construction and operation of the four electrical switches would remove 0.3 acre of vegetation in the long term; however, these switches would be located within Gulf Power Company's existing 100-foot-wide ROW easement associated with the existing 46kV transmission line. No reductions in the overall carrying capacity of the associated habitats would occur.

It is expected that the increased noise and human presence during line construction would limit wildlife use of the Military Point vicinity during the construction period. Common wildlife responses to noise disturbances are either avoidance or accommodation. The more secretive and smaller animals would typically coexist with most noise sources. Other animals, particularly those that rely on auditory cues for communication and orientation (e.g., birds) would avoid the vicinity of the noise source, moving out of the area until the source dropped to an acceptable background level for that species. Abrupt and intermittent noises are less likely to be accommodated than are the steadier, continuous noises (e.g., truck traffic).

Individual animals would likely avoid Military Point until construction was completed, likely returning to the project area and adjacent habitats upon completion of project construction. Although Military Point is somewhat isolated from other human-related activities and influences on Tyndall AFB, the degree of existing infrastructure associated with the existing transmission line ROW and ancillary facilities at and near this location (see Map 2) results in a reduced habitat value in the immediate area of the proposed project, making the area less attractive to native wildlife species.

A site reconnaissance and biological data review were conducted to specifically examine the potential effects to area bird species from line operation, focusing on the risk of avian collisions with both the proposed and existing overhead transmission lines and the potential for bird electrocutions on the proposed and existing equipment poles that transition the subaqueous cables to the overhead 46kV transmission line that serves Tyndall AFB. This analysis, the recommended retrofit measures, and the recommended new construction techniques are presented in the *Military Point 115kV Transmission Line Avian Impact Assessment* (EDM 2004). (Note: The reference to 115kV is because this line will be built to 115kV standards for meeting future energy growth.)

The impact study presented in EDM 2004 provides an in-depth analysis of the potential avian collision and electrocution risks of the Proposed Action. The potential risk of birds colliding with transmission lines depends on a number of factors, such as habitat types, line orientation to migratory flyways and foraging flight patterns, number of migratory and resident bird species, species' composition and area familiarity, visibility and weather patterns, types of human-related disturbance, and line design (Beaulaurier et al. 1982; Anderson 1978). The flight altitude and flight speed of species approaching the line and the wing loading to aspect ratio also are key factors in collisions (Beaulaurier et al. 1982; Rayner 1988).

Common area birds include ducks, herons, cranes, and pelicans, which are more susceptible to colliding with overhead lines than other avian species. To minimize the potential for increased collisions with the Proposed Action during project operation, Gulf Power Company has committed to installing the appropriate marking devices on both the proposed and existing transmission line's overhead static wires as a precaution (see Section 2.4 and Figure 1). This approach also is discussed in greater detail for the federally listed bald eagle in Section 4.1.6.

The risk of avian electrocutions also has been addressed in detail in EDM (2004). Although this proposed line would initially operate as a 46kV transmission line, it would be built to 115kV standards, thereby avoiding an electrocution risk to birds on the new transmission line structures. However, the existing electrical riser structures and vertical poles presently located at Military Point and the proposed switching structures that would be built as part of the Proposed Action could pose a threat to larger birds (e.g., osprey). Accordingly, Gulf Power Company has committed to installing the appropriate retrofit measures to minimize the electrocution risk on those structures. See Section 4.1.6 for additional detailed information.

In summary, potential habitat effects to terrestrial wildlife species would be minimal from the implementation of the Proposed Action. Any animals in the vicinity of the proposed ROW would likely avoid the project area during the construction period. The potential for avian collisions and electrocutions is greater for some bird species. Gulf Power Company has committed to a number of protection measures to minimize collision or electrocution risks on both proposed and existing structures. The marking devices, electrical retrofit recommendations, and implementation approaches are discussed in detail in EDM (2004) and summarized for the bald eagle analysis in Section 4.1.6. Implementation of these measures would be in accordance with the provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, by minimizing the potential for violations from incidental line mortalities.

4.1.6 Threatened and Endangered Species

The following impact evaluation is the main focus of this EA, examining the potential effects to the bald eagle, given the proximity of an active eagle nest to Military Point. The evaluation was divided into two primary phases or components of Gulf Power Company's transmission line project on Tyndall AFB: 1) the proposed Military Point Transmission Line Project that encompasses the construction and operation of a new, overhead 46kV transmission line across St. Andrew Bay and 2) the operation of the existing electrical infrastructure at Military Point. To facilitate review of these similar but distinct impact analyses, separate sections have been developed to address each component. These analyses are divided into:

- ◆ Proposed Project Construction Activities within Nest Buffer Zones
- ◆ Proposed Project Potential Collision Risks
- ◆ Proposed Project Potential Electrocution Risks
- ◆ Existing Line Potential Collision Risks
- ◆ Existing Line Potential Electrocution Risks

This impact assessment also is a summary of the analyses completed for the *Military Point 115kV Transmission Line Avian Impact Assessment* (EDM 2004) and the project's Biological Assessment (BA) completed for the USFWS (Tyndall 2004), in accordance with Section 7 of the ESA. The impact analyses have been completed with the assumption that the applicable environmental protection measures committed to by Gulf Power Company (see Section 2.4) would be implemented as part of the Proposed Action.

4.1.6.1 Project Construction

Bald eagles' responses to human-related activities will vary considerably, depending on a number of factors (USFWS 1987). As with many raptor species, bald eagles are generally most susceptible to disturbance by human-related activities during the early nesting activities, typically occurring during the first 12 weeks of the nesting cycle (USFWS 1987). Gulf Power

Company has committed to constructing and maintaining the new transmission line and associated equipment outside of the nesting season (October 1 to May 15) within 1,500 feet of the nest site. This committed measure is in accordance with the USFWS' (1987) guidelines to avoid or minimize certain activities within the established "Primary Zone" (750 feet) and "Secondary Zone" (1,500 feet) from the nest site.

Based on this commitment to limit activities within the Primary and Secondary Zones during the breeding period, no direct or indirect impacts to nesting eagles would be anticipated from project construction or maintenance activities. In the event that emergency line repair activities were warranted within 1,500 feet of the nest site during the breeding season (October 1 to May 15), Gulf Power Company would document this occurrence and notify the USFWS and FFWCC as soon as feasible (as outlined in the applicable protection measures in Section 3.4.2). The potential impacts from project operation are discussed below, accordingly.

If young eagles have not fledged by May 15 (i.e., delayed nesting) or if construction were to extend into the fall of 2004, Gulf Power Company would continue dialog with the applicable federal and state biologists relative to the breeding phenology of the eagles and whether a biological monitor may be warranted, in accordance with USFWS (2002).

Finally, none of the recommended restrictions for permanent development identified for either the Primary Zone or Secondary Zone (USFWS 1987) would coincide with the additional electrical infrastructure proposed for this project. The placement of the transmission line structures and associated switching equipment would be incremental and parallel to the existing electrical infrastructure presently occurring at Military Point and would not violate these USFWS' guidelines.

4.1.6.2 Potential Collision Risk with Proposed Structures

Raptors' susceptibility for colliding with power lines differs from other bird species. The potential collision risk with transmission lines depends on a number of factors as detailed in EDM (2004). Although birds of prey spend considerable time in the air, collisions occur relatively infrequently, as compared to other species (Bevanger 1994). Because of raptor species' general flight characteristics and eyesight, raptors are not as susceptible to colliding with power lines unless preoccupied or distracted (e.g., territorial defense, prey pursuit) (Olendorff and Lehman 1986; Thompson 1978). In support of this position, Olendorff and Lehman (1986) further state that except in the case of critically endangered species (e.g., California condor), collisions are a random, low-level, and biologically inconsequential mortality factor for raptors.

Six conductor wires and two overhead static wires would be suspended on Gulf Power Company's proposed transmission line crossing St. Andrew Bay to Military Point (see Figure 1). The smaller overhead static wires are often implicated with bird collisions (APLIC 1994), more so than the larger conductor wires. Although static wires that are designed to intercept lightning strikes can be removed in some instances, this is not an option in Florida that has the highest isokeraunic (thunderstorms per year) levels in the U.S.

Although raptors are not as susceptible as other bird species to colliding with power lines, the proximity of the bald eagle nest site to the proposed transmission line ROW and Military Point warrants additional protection measures to minimize the collision potential. Marking the overhead static wires makes them more visible. APLIC (1994) provides additional detailed information pertaining to collision risks and supports the use of marking devices for power lines.

Therefore, Gulf Power Company has committed to installing appropriate marking devices on the proposed transmission line's overhead static wires across St. Andrew Bay. This measure would increase the static wires' visibility and minimize potential avian collisions along this line segment. EDM (2004) outlines the available products to mark power lines and summarizes the specific advantages and disadvantages by device.

4.1.6.3 Potential Electrocution Risk of Proposed Line Segment and Structures

No electrocution risk to bald eagles exists for the transmission line segment proposed to cross St. Andrew Bay, although some risk exists for the proposed switching equipment that would be installed at Military Point. Since the transmission line would be built to 115kV standards in anticipation of increasing future electrical demands, the increased conductor clearances exceed the minimum recommendations by The Raptor Research Foundation and APLIC (1996) (i.e., 60 inches) to protect eagles from electrocutions on power lines.

The new interconnection between the overhead transmission line crossing and existing electrical infrastructure at Military Point occurs within the 750-foot Primary Zone (USFWS 1987) of the eagle nest. The new switches proposed for this interconnection are manufactured with less than 60 inches of separation, thereby representing an electrocution risk to area eagles. Gulf Power Company has committed to construct the new switch poles at Military Point to be raptor friendly and apply the appropriate devices to minimize the potential electrocution risk to perching birds, as recommended in EDM (2004).

4.1.6.4 Potential Collision Risk with Existing Structures

This EA also examines the potential effects to area bald eagles from the operation of the existing overhead 46kV transmission lines that travel south from Military Point to the Military Point Substation (see Map 2). It is apparent that the breeding bald eagles established their nest site in close proximity to this existing transmission line and equipment poles that currently serve Tyndall AFB from Military Point. To date, no historic bird mortalities have been detected along these line segments (Mobley 2003). However, one bald eagle mortality was recorded on the east side of Tyndall AFB in November 2002. This mortality occurred when an eagle was electrocuted on a lower voltage (i.e., smaller) electric distribution line when the bird went phase-to-phase between the conductor wires when flying (Mobley 2003). This distribution line is smaller with reduced clearances between the conductors as compared to the proposed Military Point transmission line.

The two existing 46kV lines use a single overhead static wire to protect the line from possible lightning strikes (see Photo 5 in Appendix A). Although these lines are closer to the active nest site than the proposed new lines, a number of factors reduce the relative collision risks, including: 1) the fact that the eagles moved into the area where power lines and electrical infrastructure were already established, which infers some level of habituation and increases area familiarity for both adult and juvenile birds; 2) vegetation along the power line corridors minimizes the collision risk for birds, particularly since the lines are at or below the height of nearby trees (APLIC 1994); 3) the terrestrial habitats along this ROW are not as attractive to foraging eagles as the open-water and coastal habitats; and 4) the degree of human-related disturbance increases as the ROW travels south from Military Point (see Map 2).

Although the collision risk to area bald eagles along the existing 46kV transmission line segments is low, Gulf Power Company also has committed to installing the appropriate line

marker devices on the overhead static wires within 1,500 feet of the active nest site, as stated in Section 2.4, to encompass both the Primary and Secondary Zones surrounding the nest. The recommended approach (i.e., devices and spacing) to mark these lines is detailed in EDM (2004).

4.1.6.5 Potential Electrocution Risk on Existing Structures

There are four existing structures presently located at Military Point that present a potential electrocution risk to raptors that may attempt to perch on them. These include 1) two electrical riser structures and 2) two vertical deadend structures, which are shown in Photo 3 in Appendix A. On these four structures at Military Point, some of the equipment and line clearances do not presently have 60 inches of phase-to-ground separation, as recommended by the Raptor Research Foundation and APLIC (1996) to reduce electrocution risks for eagles. A number of state-of-the-art devices designed to either insulate or isolate potential contact points have been recommended to minimize the risk of eagle electrocution, which are discussed in detail in EDM (2004). In accordance with these retrofit recommendations, Gulf Power Company has committed to implement a number of these retrofit measures to minimize potential electrocution risks to eagles at the riser structures and vertical deadend structures (see Sections 2.4).

4.1.7 Floodplains and Wetlands

As shown in Figure 4, two flood hazard zones, Zones AE and VE, occur at Military Point. The Proposed Action would be constructed within the 100-year floodplain of St. Andrew Bay. However, disturbance would be temporary during construction and there would be no long-term change of floodplain area or volume.

The proposed transmission line structures and ancillary equipment would avoid wetland areas. According to the FDEP's *Permit Application Appraisal* (FDEP 2003), "all wetland resources have been identified, and impacts have been avoided or minimized." All project structures would be located south (upland) of the Estuarine, Intertidal wetland present at the tip of Military Point (see Figure 5). Therefore, no impacts to jurisdictional wetlands would occur, and no coastal marsh vegetation would be affected. The project meets the FDEP's *Permit Application Appraisal* and *Consolidated Notice of Intent to Issue Wetland Resource Permit and Authorization to Use Sovereign Submerged Lands* (see Section 1.5) (FDEP 2003) and is in accordance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

4.1.8 Coastal Zone Management Program

The proposed project would be located in St. Andrew Bay at a location that is described as Class III waters. According to the U.S. Coast Guard, the established navigational vertical guide clearance for the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway at the proposed project site is 65.0 feet above Mean High Water. The new line has been designed with a low point clearance of 85.6 feet above Mean High Water. All proposed new transmission line structures on Military Point, including those outside the existing ROW, would be above the Mean High Water Line (+0.65 ft National Geodetic Vertical Datum).

Section 307(c) of the federal Coastal Zone Management Act requires that federal agencies show consistency with state management programs. The FDEP (2003) issued a *Permit Application Appraisal* and *Consolidated Notice of Intent to Issue Wetland Resource Permit and*

Authorization to Use Sovereign Submerged Lands for this entire project (see Section 1.5). This notice states that the "issuance of the wetland resource permit also constitutes a finding of consistency with Florida's Coastal Zone Management Program, as required by Section 307 of the Coastal Management Act." Therefore, this EA summarizes by the applicable regulatory statutes each resource issue, in accordance with the state's Florida Coastal Zone Management Program administered by the FDEP (2004). The 23 statutes addressed by this program are identified below by associated chapter number and title:

Chapter 161: Beach and Shore Preservation.

Coastal Construction Permit Program. Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project. The proposed new structures at the southern terminus on Military Point would be located on federal land, Tyndall AFB, and would be located above the mean high water line at "a sufficient distance landward of the beach to permit natural shoreline fluctuations and to preserve dune stability."

Coastal Construction Control Line Permit Program. Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project. The proposed new structures at the southern terminus on Military Point would be located landward of the coastal construction control line. This zone is defined as the zone along the coastline subject to flooding, erosion, and other impacts during a 100-year storm (see Zone VE on Figure 4).

Coastal Zone Protection Program. Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project. This program applies to the area that occurs between the seasonal high-water line and 1,500 feet landward of the coastal construction control line. The proposed new utility structures at the line's southern terminus on Military Point would be located approximately 3.75 miles from the nearest coastal construction control line. See Section 1.5 regarding the applicable FDEP permits issued for this project (FDEP 2003), which apply to this proposal and ensure compliance with the mandatory state statutes and construction standards.

Chapter 163: Growth Policy; County and Municipal Planning; Land Development Regulation.

Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project. The proposed project would be in conformance with Tyndall AFB's Master Plan (see Section 1.4.3).

Chapter 186: State and Regional Planning.

Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project. The proposed project would be in conformance with Tyndall AFB's Master Plan.

Chapter 252: Emergency Management.

Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project.

Chapter 253: State Lands.

The northern terminus of proposed project would be located on Gulf Power property. The concrete foundation structures crossing St. Andrew Bay would be located on state property. The southern terminus would be located on federal land, Tyndall AFB, which is addressed in this EA. As summarized in Section 1.5 of this EA, the FDEP issued a

Permit Application Appraisal and Consolidated Notice of Intent to Issue Wetland Resource Permit and Authorization to Use Sovereign Submerged Lands for the proposed project (File No. 03-0199524-001-DF) on September 15, 2003. As stated, "issuance of the wetland resource permit also constitutes a finding of consistency with Florida's Coastal Zone Management Program, as required by Section 307 of the Coastal Management Act." Therefore, the Proposed Action would meet the federal consistency requirements for Florida's Coastal Zone Management Program (FDEP 2003).

Chapter 258: State Parks and Preserves.

Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project. The proposed activities would not be located in the vicinity of a state park or an aquatic preserve.

Chapter 259: Land Acquisitions for Conservation or Recreation.

Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project. The proposed new land-based structures would be located on federal land, Tyndall AFB.

Chapter 260: Recreational Trails Systems.

Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project. The closest recreational trails are located 0.9 mile southwest of the proposed southern terminus at Military Point (see Section 1.4.6).

Chapter 267: Historical Resources.

See Section 1.4.8 regarding cultural resources and complying with Tyndall AFB's Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan.

Chapter 288: Commercial Development and Capital Improvements.

Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project.

Chapter 334: Transportation Administration.

Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project (see Section 1.4.4).

Chapter 339: Transportation Finance and Planning.

Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project.

Chapter 370: Saltwater Fisheries.

All beds and bottoms of bays, etc. within the jurisdiction of Florida are property of the state, which is outside of the scope of this EA. FDEP has exclusive power and control over all water bottoms. See Section 1.5 regarding the applicable FDEP permits issued for this project (FDEP 2003).

Chapter 372: Wildlife.

Effects/impacts of the new line on aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species are examined in this EA, emphasizing the federally threatened bald eagle in the project area (see Sections 4.1.5 and 4.1.6).

Chapter 373: Water Resources.

See Section 1.5 that discusses the FDEP's *Permit Application Appraisal and Consolidated Notice of Intent to Issue Wetland Resource Permit and Authorization to Use Sovereign Submerged Lands* for this project (FDEP 2003). Surface water quality is discussed in Section 4.1.2, and floodplains and wetlands are discussed in Section 4.1.7.

Chapter 375: Multipurpose Outdoor Recreation; Land Acquisition, Management and Conservation. Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Lands.

Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project.

Chapter 376: Pollutant Discharge Prevention and Removal.

See Section 1.4.10 regarding handling of Hazardous Materials and Wastes.

Chapter 377: Energy resource.

Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project. This project would not be related to oil, gas, or other petroleum products.

Chapter 380: Land and Water Management.

The proposed project would not adversely affect goal to "facilitate orderly and well-planned development, and protect the health, welfare, safety, and quality of life of the residents of this state." See Section 1.5 that discusses the FDEP's *Permit Application Appraisal and Consolidated Notice of Intent to Issue Wetland Resource Permit and Authorization to Use Sovereign Submerged Lands* for this project (FDEP 2003).

Chapter 381: Public Health, General Provision.

Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project.

Chapter 388: Mosquito Control.

Not applicable to proposed activities encompassed by this project.

Chapter 403: Environmental Control.

According to Chapter 403.Part II, the Electrical Power Plant and Transmission Line Siting Act, "Provisions of this act do not apply to transmission lines that are less than 15 miles in length or that do not cross a county line." The proposed transmission line for this project would only be 3,555 feet long and would not cross a county boundary. The Electrical Power Plant and Transmission Line Siting Act also states that transmission line development and construction is exempt if it is limited to established ROWs. Only

two new land-based structures proposed for this project would be located outside of Gulf Power Company's existing 100-foot ROW. This entire EA addresses the proposed siting, construction, and operation of Gulf Power Company's Military Point Transmission Line Project.

Chapter 582: Soil and Water Conservation.

See Section 4.1.3 for a discussion on soils. Water conservation is not applicable to the proposed activities encompassed by this project. See Section 1.5 that discusses the FDEP's *Permit Application Appraisal and Consolidated Notice of Intent to Issue Wetland Resource Permit and Authorization to Use Sovereign Submerged Lands* for this project (FDEP 2003).

4.2 No Action Alternative

4.2.1 *Air Quality*

Under the No Action Alternative, no additional equipment or vehicular access would occur at Military Point; therefore, no incremental, short-term increases in exhaust emissions or fugitive dust from project construction activities would occur. The ongoing maintenance of the existing 46kV transmission line and its ancillary facilities that serves Tyndall AFB would continue under this alternative, but no impacts to air quality would result from the maintenance vehicles used to periodically inspect and repair the existing line.

4.2.2 *Water Quality*

No water quality impacts would occur under the No Action Alternative. No construction activities would occur at Military Point, and no effects to surface water quality would be anticipated from the ongoing maintenance activities of the existing 46kV transmission line.

4.2.3 *Soils*

No incremental disturbance to less than 1 acre of Resoto sandy soils would occur under this project alternative. No additional effects to area soils would be anticipated from ongoing project operation and periodic maintenance inspections (every 6 years).

4.2.4 *Vegetation*

Under the No Action Alternative, no incremental disturbance to approximately 0.5 acre of grass and shrub cover or less than 0.5 acre of hardwood hammock vegetation would occur. No other impacts to native vegetation or disturbed areas would occur during ongoing project operation at or near Military Point.

4.2.5 *Wildlife*

Under the No Action Alternative, no incremental habitat effects or temporary, short-term disturbances to terrestrial wildlife species that may inhabit portions of Military Point would occur. No additional collision or electrocution risk would occur from the proposed line and switching poles associated with the Proposed Action.

4.2.6 Threatened and Endangered Species

Under the No Action Alternative, no additional power lines or electrical switching equipment would be constructed at Military Point in the vicinity of an active bald eagle nest. Operation and maintenance activities within the Primary and Secondary Zones would continue as they are currently.

4.2.7 Floodplains and Wetlands

Implementation of the No Action Alternative would not result in any direct impacts to wetlands or the coastal floodplain. No short-term construction activities would occur within the 100-year floodplain on Military Point.

4.2.8 Coastal Zone Management Program

No activities within the coastal zone would occur under this project alternative. The No Action Alternative would not apply to the State's Coastal Zone Management Program.

4.3 Cumulative Effects

Of the 29,000 acres that comprise Tyndall AFB, approximately 3,900 acres (less than 15% of the installation) have been developed. These developed acreages encompass about 1,000 acres of improved grounds, 2,250 acres of semi-improved grounds, and 650 acres of developed areas such as buildings, roads, parking, and airfield pavements. The potential cumulative effects from implementation of the Proposed Action attempted to examine the additive nature of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, focusing on those activities and developments in the vicinity of Military Point.

Past projects at and near Military Point would include:

- ♦ The construction and operation of Gulf Power Company's existing 46kV transmission lines that interconnect with the St. Andrew Bay subaqueous cables and serve Tyndall AFB.
- ♦ The Military Point Lagoon, part of Tyndall AFB's previous Wastewater Treatment Plant.
- ♦ Bay County's recently constructed Military Point Regional Advanced Wastewater Treatment (AWT) facility that now handles water treatment needs for an expanded area, including that for Tyndall AFB.
- ♦ A reclaimed water main from the Military Point Regional AWT facility to the Pelican Point Golf Course on Tyndall AFB.
- ♦ Associated infrastructure to support these facilities.
- ♦ Established recreational trails and access roads that are located 0.9 mile or more southwest of Military Point.

All of these previously developed facilities incrementally add to the developed nature of the Military Point area, hence the land use and vegetation cover designation of "Developed Mission/Military Activities" category (see Figure 3).

No other actions or development of Military Point are presently occurring, other than the ongoing operation and maintenance of the facilities and utilities that occur in this general area. The only future project planned for Military Point, beyond that proposed as part of Gulf Power Company's Military Point Transmission Line Project, would be the second phase of Bay County Public Utilities Department's permitted expansion of the existing Military Point Regional AWT. This expansion would increase the facility's capacity an additional 12.0 million gallons per day, accommodating projected regional population growth through 2016.

Potential cumulative impacts to regional air quality would be short term and insignificant. The hydrogen sulfide (H_2S) gas generated from the existing Military Point Regional AWT is within regulatory limits, and the increases in vehicle emissions during Military Point line construction would not significantly increase emissions levels. The anticipated low levels of fugitive dust from both the Proposed Action and the future expansion of the AWT would not occur at the same time; therefore, no cumulative issues associated with fugitive dust would apply.

Past projects have incrementally contributed to surface disturbance, although the quantity of stormwater runoff from these actions has not significantly increased. Given the limited and short-term nature of the project, no cumulative impacts to surface water or groundwater quality would be anticipated.

There would be minor cumulative impacts to the sandy soils located at and south of Military Point. The incremental development of utilities and their ancillary facilities has resulted in an incremental disturbance of soils from past, present, and future projects. However, the less than 1 acre of Resota sand that would be affected from implementation of the Proposed Action is insignificant, and cumulative effects to soils from increased erosion and sedimentation rates would be minor. No cumulative loss of productivity would be expected, given the high permeability and low soil fertility associated with most of these soils located near Military Point.

The loss of vegetative cover from the past, present, and future projects would result in cumulative effects to native vegetation in this area, similarly to that discussed for soils. The past and future development of utilities from Military Point to serve Tyndall AFB has resulted in a cumulative loss of vegetative cover types, primarily composed of the upland hardwoods, sand pine scrub, and slash pine (see Figure 3) in this overall area. The incremental loss of less than 1 acre of grass, shrub, and hardwood vegetation from implementation of the Proposed Project would not significantly contribute to these cumulative effects to native vegetation and cover.

The only cumulative effects that would apply to terrestrial or aquatic wildlife species would include the incremental habitat effects, as discussed for vegetative cover. The cumulative impacts from short-term increased human presence during line construction would be minor, given the limited number of operational or maintenance personnel at or near Military Point during the year, and there would be no overlap with the future expansion of the Military Point Regional AWT. The truck traffic hauling sludge associated with the AWT is an estimated 516 trips annually; however, this activity occurs along existing roads 0.6 mile southwest of Military Point. The loss of less than 1 acre of native habitats for wildlife and the short-term construction period from implementation of the Proposed Action would not result in significant cumulative effects to native wildlife species.

Similarly, potential cumulative effects to the nesting bald eagles near Military Point would be the small, but incremental development of the utilities in this area and encroachment of human-related activities near the nest site. Few of these past and present developments occur within the 1,500-foot buffer established for the eagle's Secondary Zone of protection. Any future projects also would have to adhere to the federal and state guidelines established to protect active bald eagle nest sites. No cumulative effects to bald eagles would result from the changes in the collision or electrocution risk, given the committed measures to minimize or avoid these potential impacts and retrofit existing structures to further reduce this risk to area birds.

Construction within the 100-year floodplain would not result in significant cumulative impacts. The incremental addition of the power line structures to Military Point would not modify floodplain function, relative to past, present, and future actions in this area. No cumulative effects to wetlands would occur, since the Proposed Action would avoid impacts to wetlands and associated coastal marsh vegetation.

No cumulative effects to the state's Coastal Zone Management Program have been identified. Any resource issues discussed for this program specific to the Program's goals and objectives have been discussed in the EA.

5.0 LIST OF PREPARERS AND CONTRIBUTORS

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6.0 LIST OF AGENCIES AND OTHERS CONSULTED REGARDING PROPOSED ACTION

The following agencies, organizations, and companies were contacted in support of developing these EA analyses. The EA was coordinated with the Environmental Protection Agency. Coordination with the State of Florida occurred through the State Clearinghouse. All other interested persons had an opportunity to comment on the Draft EA through the Public Notice process.

Agency, Organization, or Company	Contact Name
Bay County Audubon Society	Ron Houser
Bay County Audubon Society and Natural Resources Committee	Dr. Neil Lamb
Bay County Audubon Society – Christmas Bird Count	-
EDM International, Inc. – Avian Research	Rick Harness
Environmental Consulting & Technology	Phil Simpson
Federal Emergency Management Agency	-
Florida Breeding Bird Atlas	-
Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) – Coastal Zone Management Program	Jasmin Raffington
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	Dan Sullivan
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	Steve Nesbitt
Florida Natural Areas Inventory	-
Florida State Clearinghouse and Comprehensive Plan Review	Lauren Milligan
Natural Resources Conservation Service	-
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Diane Bateman
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Stan Simpkins

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8.0 ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFB	Air Force Base
AFI	Air Force Instruction
APLIC	Avian Power Line Interaction Committee
AWT	Advanced Wastewater Treatment
BA	Biological Assessment
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DFIRM	Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map
DOD	Department of Defense
EA	Environmental Assessment
ECT	Environmental Consulting & Technology
EDM	EDM International, Inc.
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
F.A.C.	Florida Administrative Code
FDEP	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FFWCC	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
F.S.	Florida Statutes
ICWW	Intracoastal Waterway
INRMP	Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
ROW	right-of-way
U.S.	United States
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

APPENDIX A REPRESENTATIVE PHOTOS



**Photo 1 Tyndall AFB Shoreline Southeast of Military Point
(Location #1 on Map 1)**



Photo 2 Military Point of Tyndall AFB (Location #2 on Map 1)



Photo 3 Existing 46kV Transmission Line, Associated Equipment Structures, and Osprey Nesting Platform at Military Point (Location #2 on Map 1)



Photo 4 Active Bald Eagle Nest near Military Point



Photo 5 Existing 46kV Overhead Transmission Lines in Proximity to Active Bald Eagle Nest near Military Point (Location #3 on Map 1)

APPENDIX B
COMMENTS AND RESPONSES TO DRAFT EA



*"Dedicated to Excellence . . .
People Serving People"*

March 25, 2004

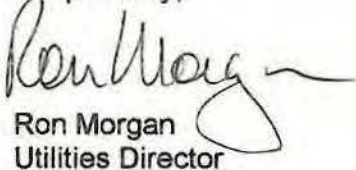
John Dingwall
Project Manager
325th Civil Engineer Squadron
119 Alabama Avenue
~~Tyndall AFB FL 32403-5014~~

Re: Gulf Power Company Military Point Transmission Line Project

Dear Mr. Dingwall

This is to advise that the City of Panama City Utilities Department has no comments regarding the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Gulf Power Company Military Point Transmission Line Project, Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida dated February 27, 2004.

Respectfully,


Ron Morgan
Utilities Director

RM:ads



BOARD OF COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS

www.co.bay.fl.us

POST OFFICE BOX 1818
PANAMA CITY, FLORIDA 32402

COMMISSIONERS:

JOHN G. NEWBERRY, JR.
DISTRICT I

GEORGE B. GAINER
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CORNEL BROCK
DISTRICT III

JERRY L. GIRVIN
DISTRICT IV

MICHAEL J. ROPA
DISTRICT V

AMELIA D. BRANGACCIO
COUNTY MANAGER

April 19, 2004

Mr. John Dingwall
Department of the Air Force
325th Civil Engineer Squadron
119 Alabama Avenue
Tyndall AFB, FL 32403-5014

Dear Mr. Dingwall:

I have reviewed the proposal for Gulf Power Company to construct a new aerial (overhead) 46kV-transmission line to serve Tyndall AFB. Based on my review of the facts and analysis in the Environmental Assessment, I conclude that the proposed action will not have a significant impact either by itself, or considering cumulative impacts on Bay County.

If you need any further information on this matter, please contact me.

Very truly yours,

Robert J. Majka, Jr.
Chief of Emergency Services

RJM/ac



Jeb Bush
Governor

Department of Environmental Protection

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Colleen M. Ca.
Secretary

April 29, 2004

Mr. John Dingwall, P.E.
119 Alabama Avenue
Tyndall AFB FL 32403-5014

RE: Department of the Air Force – Draft Environmental Assessment and FONSI for the Gulf Power Company Military Point Transmission Line Project at Tyndall Air Force Base – Bay County, FL
SAI# FL200403195638C

Dear Mr. Dingwall:

The Florida State Clearinghouse, pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 12372, Gubernatorial Executive Order 95-359, the Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1451-1464, as amended, and the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321, 4331-4335, 4341-4347, as amended, has coordinated the review of the above-referenced Draft Environmental Assessment and FONSI.

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) notes that any work done within FDOT rights-of-way will require a permit. The Air Force is advised to contact Ms. Lisa Weeks of the Panama City Maintenance Office at 3633 Hwy 390, Panama City, FL 32405-2700, or by phone at (850) 872-4490 regarding FDOT right-of-way permits.

Based on the information contained in the application and the enclosed comments provided by our reviewing agencies, the state has determined that the above-referenced action is consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the project. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Mr. Daniel Lawson at (850) 245-2174.

Yours sincerely,

Sally B. Mann, Director
Office of Intergovernmental Programs

SBM/dl

cc: Dick Fancher, DEP, Northwest District

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Printed on recycled paper.



Florida

Department of Environmental Protection

"More Protection. Less Process"



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Project Information	
Project:	FL200403195638C
Comments Due:	April 18, 2004
Letter Due:	May 18, 2004
Description:	DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE - DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FONSI FOR THE GULF POWER COMPANY MILITARY POINT TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT AT TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE - BAY COUNTY, FLORIDA.
Keywords:	USAF - GULF POWER CO. TRANSMISSION LINE - TYNDALL AFB, BAY CO.
CFDA #:	12.200
Agency Comments:	
WEST FLORIDA RPC - WEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL	
No Comments - generally consistent with the West Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan.	
BAY - BAY COUNTY	
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UNIT - OFFICE OF POLICY AND BUDGET, ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UNIT	
No Final Comments Received	
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS	
Released Without Comment	
FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION - FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION	
No Final Comments Received	
STATE - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE	
No Comment	
TRANSPORTATION - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	
Staff notes that for any work to be done within FDOT rights-of-way, a permit will need to be obtained. Please contact Ms. Lisa Weeks at the Panama City Maintenance Office, 3633 Hwy 390, Panama City, FL 32405-2700, or by phone at (850) 872-4490.	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	
All issues were resolved during the Wetland Resource Permitting (WRP) process. Permit issued March 4, 2004.	
NORTHWEST FLORIDA WMD - NORTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT	
No Comment	

For more information please contact the Clearinghouse Office at:

3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD MS-47
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000
TELEPHONE: (850) 245-2161
FAX: (850) 245-2190

Visit the Clearinghouse Home Page to query other projects.



WEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

Post Office Box 9759 • 3435 North 12th Avenue • Pensacola, Florida 32513-9759
Phone (850) 595-8910 • S/C 695-8910 • (800) 226-8914 • Fax (850) 595-8967

Lel Czeck
Executive Director

Cody Taylor
Chairman

Sydney Joel Pate
Vice-Chairman

FAX TRANSMITTAL (S) Total # of Pages (including cover) 1

TO: STATE CLEARINGHOUSE • FAX: (850) 245-2190/(850) 245-2189
Phone: 850-245-2161

DATE: April 13, 2004

FROM: Terry Joseph, Intergovernmental Review Coordinator
Extension 206
joseph1@wfrpc.dst.fl.us

SUBJECT: State Clearinghouse Review(s) Fax Transmittals:

SAI #	Project Description	RPC #
FL: 200403265709C	Dept. of the Air Force – Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) for Santa Rosa Island Mission Utilization Plan, Eglin Air Force Base- Okaloosa and Santa Rosa Counties	0637-4-01-2004
FL: 200403195638C	Department of the Air Force – Draft environmental assessment and FONSI for the Gulf Power Company Military Point transmission line project at Tyndall Air Force Base, Bay County, Florida	B541-03-25-2004

X	No Comments – Generally consistent with the WFSRPP
	Comments Attached

If you have any questions, please call.

"...Serving Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Holmes & Washington Counties and their municipalities..."

COUNTY: BAY

SAI - LEAF
2004-2058

DATE: 3/19/2004

COMMENTS DUE DATE: 4/18/2004

CLEARANCE DUE DATE: 5/18/2004

SAI#: FL200403195638C

MESSAGE:

STATE AGENCIES	WATER MNGMNT. DISTRICTS	OPB POLICY UNIT	RPCS & LOC GOVS
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS	NORTHWEST FLORIDA WMD	ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UNIT	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION			
FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION			
X STATE			
TRANSPORTATION			

The attached document requires a Coastal Zone Management Act/Florida Coastal Management Program consistency evaluation and is categorized as one of the following:

- Federal Assistance to State or Local Government (15 CFR 930, Subpart F). Agencies are required to evaluate the consistency of the activity.
- X Direct Federal Activity (15 CFR 930, Subpart C). Federal Agencies are required to furnish a consistency determination for the State's concurrence or objection.
- Outer Continental Shelf Exploration, Development or Production Activities (15 CFR 930, Subpart E). Operators are required to provide a consistency certification for state concurrence/objection.
- Federal Licensing or Permitting Activity (15 CFR 930, Subpart D). Such projects will only be evaluated for consistency when there is not an analogous state license or permit.

Project Description:

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE - DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FONSI FOR THE GULF POWER COMPANY MILITARY POINT TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT AT TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE - BAY COUNTY, FLORIDA.

To: Florida State Clearinghouse

AGENCY CONTACT AND COORDINATOR (SCH)
3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD MS-47
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000
TELEPHONE: (850) 245-2161
FAX: (850) 245-2190

EO. 12372/NEPA Federal Consistency

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Comment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Comment/Consistent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comment Attached | <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent/Comments Attached |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable | <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent/Comments Attached |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable |

From: Division of Historical Resources
Division/Bureau: Bureau of Historic Preservation

Reviewer: S. EDWARDS

Date: 4-9-04

NHPA /X:42538

James A. Korman, Supervisor
4-9-2004

RECEIVED

APR 13 2004

OIP/OLGA

04 MAR 24 PM 1

COUNTY: BAY

DATE: 3/19/2004
COMMENTS DUE DATE: 4/18/2004
CLEARANCE DUE DATE: 5/18/2004
SAI#: FL200403195638C

MESSAGE:

STATE AGENCIES	WATER MNGMNT. DISTRICTS	OPB POLICY UNIT	RPCS & LOC GOVS
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS	X NORTHWEST FLORIDA WMD	ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UNIT	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION			
FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION			
STATE			
TRANSPORTATION			

The attached document requires a Coastal Zone Management Act/Florida Coastal Management Program consistency evaluation and is categorized as one of the following:

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Project Description:

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE - DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FONSI FOR THE GULF POWER COMPANY MILITARY POINT TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT AT TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE - BAY COUNTY, FLORIDA.

To: Florida State Clearinghouse

AGENCY CONTACT AND COORDINATOR (SCH)
3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD MS-47
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000
TELEPHONE: (850) 245-2161
FAX: (850) 245-2190

EO. 12372/NEPA Federal Consistency

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Comment | <input type="checkbox"/> No Comment/Consistent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comment Attached | <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent/Comments Attached |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable | <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent/Comments Attached |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable |

NO COMMENTS

From:

NWFWMD
Division/Bureau: Resource Management Div.
Reviewer: Duncan J. Cairns
Date: 24 MARCH 04
Date:

**NORTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
Project Review Form**

TO: State Clearinghouse
Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, MS 47
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

DATE: March 24, 2004

SUBJECT: Project Review: Intergovernmental Coordination
Title: Department of the Air Force-Draft Environmental Assessment and
Fonsi for the Gulf Power Company Military Point Transmission Line
Project at Tyndall Air Force Base-Bay County, FL
SAI #: FL200403195638C

The District has reviewed the subject application and attachments in accordance with its responsibilities and authority under the provisions of Chapter 373, Florida Statutes. As a result review, the District has the following responses:

ACTION

- ☒ No Comment.
- ☐ Supports the project.
- ☐ Objects to the project; explanation attached.
- ☐ Has no objection to the project; explanation optional.
- ☐ Cannot evaluate the project; explanation attached.
- ☐ Project requires a permit from the District under _____.

DEGREE OF REVIEW

- ☒ Documentation was reviewed.
- ☐ Field investigation was performed.
- ☐ Discussed and/or contacted appropriate office about project.
- ☐ Additional documentation/research is required.
- ☐ Comments attached.

SIGNED _____

Maia Culbertson

RECEIVED

Duncan Jay Cairns
Chief, Bur. Env. & Res. Plng.

MAR 25 2004

OIP/OLGA